The AMERICAN REVIEW

VOLUME SEVEN NUMBER ONE

APRIL 1936

The Will to Freedom

HOFFMAN NICKERSON

IN ALL political discussion – and where today is such discussion not heard? – the words freedom and liberty constantly recur. They are defined in many different ways but on one point all are agreed, that is that they are threatened. All acknowledge the urgent need for accurate definition and vigorous defense.

To this debate Ross Hoffman has added a useful and admirable book,* good in itself and also notable because of the position of its author, a devout Roman Catholic, who at a time when certain "intellectuals" of his Church are drifting toward collectivism speaks out boldly for the liberties normal to Western Man.

He begins by noting the breakdown of the old-fashioned liberal state. Our reasonable and time-honored liberties are endangered by the constantly increasing authority of innumerable government officials, the natural receivers-in-bankruptcy of the political modernism of the last four centuries. To reverse the drift toward a bureaucratic, servile state and to establish an authority which will preserve instead of destroying freedom, he proposes a return to the political concepts common to our classical and Christian tradition.

---

* THE WILL TO FREEDOM *by Ross J. S. Hoffman* (SHEED & WARD. 150 pp. $1.50).

He explains the contemporary threat to freedom by the following masterful analysis of the nineteenth-century liberal state:

> It embodied no recognizable principles, rested on no rational basis, had no philosophical justification whatever, and could therefore appeal to nothing beyond expediency, material success, and a baseless, irrational optimism. Its executive . . . was a mere implement of party majority. . . . It is dying before our eyes. . . . Its lack of first principles . . . hatred of authority . . . parliamentary corruption . . . stupid contempt of religion and morals . . . have brought it to judgement.

The two rival heirs of dying liberalism are Communism and Fascism. The Communists are the vanguard or spearhead of the collectivist tendency, including such men as John Dewey and Harold J. Laski who see ". . . personal freedom and moral values . . . as mere reflexes of the economic arrangement". Indeed materialist Communism is the logical goal of materialist, bourgeois liberalism. It is simply liberalism standing on its head. "The whole Communist movement . . . is either at war with or in stupid ignorance of the concept of man and the traditional morality on which our civilization rests." Hence it "has . . . nothing of value for us save the lessons we may read in its errors".

The attempt to show Fascism and Communism as blood brothers because both are anti-democratic in method is dismissed with a just scorn. Such a claim can be made only by putting the cart before the horse, emphasizing mere political methods while neglecting the social order which political methods exist solely to protect.

Nor is the author frightened by the bugaboo or caricature of Fascism drawn by semi-Communist liberals. Whereas Communism develops from an inhuman but consistent body of doctrine, Fascism is to be understood chiefly as a reaction against that inhumanity. Our ancestors organized and defended their liberties by innumerable strong and free associations — families, guilds, Orders of Knights or Monks, etc. — which the liberal state disintegrated in the name of individualism, losing tangible and genuine human liberties in the name of an unreal, abstract "Liberty" that never was nor ever could be. Socialism has not broken with the old individualism; it has only affirmed that individuals may get more through collective combination . . . a mechanical rearrangement of interests and functions, not a revived social organism. The liberal says the individual interest is best served by one arrangement, the socialist says by another; but for both the individual is the one reality . . . and . . . society is . . . not an organic thing but a mechanical sum of autonomous persons.

The final word against socialism is indeed exactly this, that it completes the action of liberalism in distintegrating organic society, and is on that account unsuited to the nature of man, especially that Western Man of Europe whose nature has been so richly cultivated under the traditions of the Christian community. That man simply will not have this thing that atomizes his society, de-forms his nature, and cuts at the roots of his culture. He may be deceived for a time by its external features, its superficial reasonableness, its claim to . . . right very obvious wrongs, its vision of material plenty, of order and altruistic benevolence. But as he comes near the thing he smells the Pit and shrinks back. And in our time so near has he come to it that he is in active, if not always conscious or well-conceived, reaction away from it.

This is the central point of the author's argument; the classical and Christian tradition is normal to Western Man. He is discussing primarily the political aspect of that tradition but his thesis would fit its other aspects – artistic and philosophical, for instance – equally well. Most of our ancestors have indeed held this tradition, as most of us hold it today, thoughtlessly, without deep or full analysis. But when its life has been threatened by alien forces, as in the Middle Ages by Islam, then Western Man has turned upon the assailants with a fierce energy that has filled many a page of history. In our author's words: "so is he stirring to action today against Communism and its moral and cultural implications. Whoever has not discerned this immense spiritual fact . . . cannot plumb the depth of meaning in Fascist behavior, for . . . on this reaction . . . Fascism thrives. A vision of desolation and horror has frightened Western men and Fascism is the product of that fear." Mussolini, Hitler, and their fellows have merely put themselves at the head of masses who were waiting for leaders.

This keen understanding of Fascism is a notable merit in our author. To his criticisms of the movement we shall presently turn.

What then makes Communism formidable? In Russia it is colored by a strange idolatry, a worship of the Machine as God. Elsewhere it is strong because it follows the liberal drift by pandering to the particular vices of the proletariat which liberalism has created, especially the vice of desiring comfort, amusement, and security at the expense of liberties and economic independence.

Fascism on the contrary is a defense of property, indeed most Fascists advocate its wide diffusion by means of small ownership; to borrow the name of the English Chesterton-Belloc movement, they are distributists. The distributist achievements of Fascism indeed remain small, but to rail with the Communist against Fascists as the hirelings of plutocracy is merely to ignore the difficulty of restoring small property in societies deeply sunken into proletarianism. At least, "Italy and Germany today are ruled by men of politics and war, not by capitalists and their hired mouthpieces. They have governments that actually govern, that govern even the rich."

On the other hand our author severely criticizes many Fascist ideas. Notwithstanding the Fascist defense of property, Fascist insistence upon totalitarian state authority may endanger the just liberties of individuals. Caesar-worship may become a poisonous thing. Moreover existing Fascisms contain elements rightly to be condemned as romantic; in Italy nationalism has been exaggerated, in Germany not only nationalism but also the far baser worship of race.

In measured opposition to the doubtful elements in Fascism, and in total, unqualified opposition to Communism, Professor Hoffman takes his stand upon the political tradition common to Western Man. His platform is: popular sovereignty, natural law, the social contract, and the Prince. Up to this point the reviewer has been in enthusiastic agreement. But here, precisely because he finds the author's thought interesting and significant, he welcomes the opportunity for a little debate.

Professor Hoffman's language is that of Suarez the seventeenth-century Spanish Jesuit eminent both as theologian and as political philosopher. Now the reviewer has neither read Suarez nor been convinced by those who have. To begin with, there is at least a strong appearance of contradiction between the first and the last planks of our author's platform, popular sovereignty and the Prince. In reality of course the contradiction is not so gross as at first appears. Whatever one thinks of them, certainly the early Jesuits, unlike the silly democratic followers of Rousseau, saw the advantages of one-man rule and in practice desired that rule to be strong and stable. Probably they could not conceive of social stability being seriously disturbed, for they were dealing with societies so strongly forged and welded together by religion that they were to survive for several centuries the loss of religious unity. Consequently those early Jesuits were happily ignorant of the corrosive effects of such political formulae as equality and the social contract. Even had they foreseen those effects they might have thought themselves covered by their verbal reconciliation between popular sovereignty and the Prince. By Princes they meant the strong monarchs then ruling practically all Christendom. By popular sovereignty and the social contract they meant merely that kings or other hereditary magistrates were not irresponsible but held their power as trustees for the community, which might rightfully disobey or even dethrone them should their commands violate either natural law or the written charters and immemorial customs by which the community ordered itself.

But this popular sovereignty was a vague and passive affair; even at the height of the Religious Wars few men could have foreseen the man-eating monster which it was to become. Its horrible tyrannies and the colossal massacres of its wars and revolutions were still mercifully hidden. Again, take the phrase "the social contract". All governments must indeed exist by the consent of the governed. To that extent they result from a sort of contract between rulers and ruled. But usually the consent of the governed is almost wholly passive; it has always been so in the Orient, and even in the western democracies of today those who have done political work know how blank and empty of positive opinions is the mind of the average citizen. Carry the idea of a social contract beyond a more or less passive consent of the governed and you fall into all sorts of errors. There is no more a contract between a man and his native land than there is between a child and its parents; he may abandon or attack his country as he may desert, oppose, or even murder his father and mother, but he remains forever the product of all three.

Again, popular sovereignty in the Suarez-Hoffman sense no more resembles what is usually meant by that term than a sleeping lion resembles a little dog which is forever running about and yapping. Indeed a cynic might say that freedom to yap at anything and every-body, especially one's betters, is today considered the very essence of popular sovereignty.

The term "natural law" is equally open to misconstruction. Properly understood it is admirable. Certainly there are natural laws in the world of human association as in that of physical phenomena. One remembers the famous passage from Sophocles' *Antigone* concerning ". . . the unwritten and unfailing laws of heaven whose life is not from today or yesterday but from everlasting, nor does any man know their beginning". And again from the same poet's *Oedipus*: ". . . laws born in the clear high heaven, whose father is heaven alone, neither did mortals beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep. The power of God is mighty and grows not old." So also one remembers the homelier but sturdy saying of Calvin Coolidge, itself not altogether lacking in epigrammatic force worthy of the classic tongues: "Men do not make the laws. They discover them." But, alas, even educated people today mean something very different by natural law; to them it is mere animalism, the law of club and fang, "nature red in tooth and claw", the "survival of the fittest", and all the other expansive and expensive follies which have made the modern world a slaughter-house. What Professor Hoffman means is natural law not on the animal but on the human level as understood by the philosophers and legists of the ancient, classic, and the mediaeval worlds. But in political discussion, and most of all when sounding a slogan, the slightest misunderstanding is fatal. Certain poems and passages of mystic prose have attracted by their very obscurity but a cheer or rallying cry must be unmistakable.

Obviously there is no confusion in our author's mind, which mind indeed is as clear as it is forceful. Even the apparent, verbal confusion just noted is soon cleared away by further reading of his pages. The reviewer mentions it chiefly because he himself, being like Professor Hoffman an historically-minded person, has often used terms perfectly clear to him which did not always carry the same meaning to others.

The author next asks why our liberties have withered while every visible and audible leader of thought was constantly praising them and proposing their enlargement. His reason is both true and simple: those leaders, even when honest and well-meaning, lacked authority. They were mere creatures of social and party strife. From their positions of leadership they could often see more clearly than their followers what should be done, just as men on the bridge of a steamer can see more than those on the decks below them. But they could not apply their knowledge because they were enslaved to the lower-deckers, that is to the crowd. Now the mentality of crowds is always direct in the bad sense as well as the good; they are incapable of taking long views. Consequently those who govern by their favor can execute little but a series of temporary expedients. Moreover, crowds emancipated from traditional restraints become more and more creatures of appetite and therefore follow not honest and well-meaning leaders but demagogues, base fellows who rouse their followers' appetites.

Our ancestors were wiser; they loyally supported royal authority precisely because the King was the guardian of his subjects' liberties and must be formidable for their defense. The average King – himself the product of a healthy society – would no more have thought of attacking popular liberties than Mussolini or Hitler would think of prohibiting wine and beer. Our society today is not as healthy as it might be, on that one point all agree, however contradictory their diagnoses and remedies. Whether a man thinks private property or the Communist threat of revolution to be the illness from which society suffers, clearly neither can be purged without strong medicine, which will necessitate the establishment of some authority able to compel the taking of the dose. That means a strong government independent of temporary popular whim.

Amusingly enough, at this point Professor Hoffman very effectively quotes Walter Lippmann, that talented Jewish journalist who never tires of opposing dictatorships and praising "democracy" – as if either our own Constitution or the vile French parliamentary oligarchy or the slightly less diseased British parliamentary oligarchy were democracies! For Lippmann the duty of the State should be

> to counteract the mass errors of the individualist crowd by doing the opposite of what the crowd is doing; it saves when the crowd is spending too much, it borrows when the crowd is saving too much; it economizes when the crowd is extravagant, and it spends when the crowd is afraid to spend; it contracts when the crowd is expanding; it becomes enterprising when the crowd is depressed; it buys in sellers' markets and sells in buyers' markets; it taxes when the crowd is hoarding; it becomes an employer when there is private unemployment, and it shuts down when there is work for all. Its ideal is to prevent excess; its general principle is not to impose a social order conceived by officials but to maintain in a

changing order, worked out by the initiative and energy of individuals, a golden mean.

On this Professor Hoffman temperately comments: "The State that behaves in this way is manifestly not . . . responsive to public opinion . . . but . . . can act independently against the will of the people." In other words what Mr. Lippmann wants, or at least what he logically must have wanted when he wrote the passage cited, is a State in which the ruler is guided not by popularity but by his own conscience. It is no argument against authority to say that its possessors may abuse it; any man may and occasionally will abuse any power which he has. The question is whether we have better chances of upholding our civilized tradition under a strong government or without one. To this the answer is all too clear: without a strong government determined to maintain conditions normal to Western Man where these remain and to restore them where they have been lost, the drift of a proletarian society under "liberal government" is toward collectivist tyranny. In every such society the servile state, that is, the tendency to give the proletariat security by transferring its members to the status of state serfs, takes hold like an octopus whose tentacles can be cut loose only by an effort beyond the power of temporary majorities.

It is all very well to say with the old-fashioned liberals that truth of itself is mighty and will prevail. Professor Hoffman notes:

> A lie which has ten million dollars of invested cash behind it can make short shrift of the countering truth which has no cash at all. Big business, which rules the

modern world wherever strong government is lacking, can tell any lie it wishes and apparently will tell any lie that may be profitable. It can lie over the ether waves to forty million Americans, day in and day out, and it can convince countless millions that their own wordly interests are dependent on perpetuating its lies. The bankers can lie to us about foreign bonds and make millions; Hollywood can lie to us about morals and make millions; so can every national advertiser and press magnate. The instruments of propaganda, — for saying anything at all, whether true or false, — are so great and formidable today, and the stakes of the contest are so tremendous, that the old nineteenth-century liberal doctrine respecting intellectual liberty dates like the stage coach. A hundred years ago one might have said sensibly enough, "Let the liars and lunatics rave. They will not get far with sensible people who hear their mad nonsense contradicted." But today the liars and lunatics rave into forty million radios, and the roar is so loud that we can seldom hear the voice of truth and reason even when it is occasionally permitted to speak.

The coming State will have to be on the side of common honesty; it will have to proceed against liars as it now (occasionally) proceeds against thieves.

The danger of propaganda today is that those who represent the evil tendencies in our society are particularly skilful in its use: advertisers and high pressure salesmen are masters of the art of separating people from their money as the Communist agitator is master of the somewhat similar art of separating them from their liberties.

What then constitutes a healthy state? The question is almost the same as that other question: "What are the liberties essential to Western Man?" To this the author addresses himself in the last chapter "Authority and Tyranny". In every case of the degeneration of authority into tyranny he finds that the society over which the authority was exercised had itself fallen into decay. Augustus for instance "sought to revive the old Roman spirit and traditional culture. Unfortunately neither he nor his successors possessed . . . means for infusing Roman life with fresh . . . energies of the spirit, without which restoration of a sound society was impossible." The true liberties are personal liberties, including the possession of and control over some productive capital. Political liberties, the possession of a microscopic share in the selection of those who govern, have been valued as instruments for achieving personal and economic liberties. If they fail to achieve their purpose, they are worthless. They have failed to prevent the vile modern cancer of proletarianism and there is no evidence that they can cure the disease which they themselves have allowed to grow so great. As in Augustus' time, strong government is not a cure-all; it can merely serve as the mechanism through which the living forces of our society can work. If intelligence and virility have vanished, then no government can do more than postpone final collapse. The prophets of Fate and Doom with Spengler at their head proclaim that virtue is indeed gone from us, but no believer in free-will can surrender so easily the future of Christendom.

How then can monarchy, the strong government of a true Prince pledged to maintain and restore tradition, be established? To ask this is to raise the whole question of leadership in the modern world. To quote Professor Hoffman again:

Manifestly, there is but one way to this end. It is through the rise of a revolutionary union of men sworn to a creed and determined . . . on restoring . . . the common political tradition of our civilization . . . men of patriotism and tested character . . . entirely convinced that the whole duty of the State is to . . . the free growth of man as a human being; men capable of sacrifice and chivalric action, who ask nothing for themselves, men who will fight for the rights of others while thinking only of duty for themselves; men who can submit to a discipline, who can obey as well as command. Have we such men? Can we look for a modern knighthood?

That is indeed the question. One might phrase it differently by asking whether we can revive the spirit of the gentleman, the statesman and soldier who was the successor of the mediaeval knight. Obviously the recruits for such an order must come chiefly from the rich including the upper middle class. So far that class has been commercialist, with a sprinkling of idealistic youth who can think of nothing better to do than to turn socialist. But there is plenty of intelligence and virility left, and upon the enlistment of these in the service of tradition will depend the future of Western Man.

Did space permit, the reviewer would welcome the opportunity for a little more debate. For instance, it is a little strange to find a man of Professor Hoffman's caliber still cherishing such tenderness toward the French Revolution. Also one wonders whether so keen an intelligence can believe that either revolutions or counter-revolutions can be made with rose-water. Such things, however, are but details which do not dim the pleasure and interest of this valuable book.

John Bailey

PAUL ELMER MORE

IN THE year 1923 the subject of this slight sketch was candidate for the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, and in a letter* expressed his doubts of success (which were confirmed by the event): "Of course it's absurd enough that there should be any question of my sitting in M. Arnold's seat, and I should be horribly frightened at exposing my unlearning. But it is very unlikely, as everyone at Oxford knows Garrod, and few have heard of me. A friend of mine canvassing Oriel Common Room was naturally met by 'Who is John Bailey?'" That is a query, I fear, likely to be urged by many – by most Americans certainly – who read my title: Who was John Bailey? If pressed these querists may recollect that they have read his *Johnson* and his *Milton* in the Home University Library and will admit the excellence of these popular biographies. But somehow the little books, though admired, did not fix the author's name in their memory. Of his essays and of his journalistic contributions to *The Times Literary Supplement* they have probably never heard.

The fact is easily explained. Much of his writing – all of that in *The Times* – was anonymous; and the quality of his criticism was not often of a kind to kindle enthusiasm in the ordinary reader. This is not because Bailey was a feeble or unaccomplished critic; but he was one who was always aiming to "make centrality interesting", and though he might say that "no praise could give [him] greater pleasure than this", – and indeed it is a high encomium, – yet the lack of anything startling or provocative in such a program is likely to leave the ordinary seekers after novelty cold. Again, in one of the fragments of his Diary he enters this record: "much pleased with a letter from Bruce [Richmond, editor of *The Times Supplement*] who says Hadow and others are enthusiastic over my Bridges article, and he wants to know how I manage to be interesting and yet 'keep to the middle of the road'. It is just the praise that pleases me. The thing is to make the true seem new: not to make the new seem true." Mr. Bailey had his reward; but sobriety is not the path to noisy renown.

---

* JOHN BAILEY, 1864-1931, LETTERS AND DIARIES *edited by his wife* (JOHN MURRAY, London. 10/6).

I would not count such a temper against the critic; rather I should say that nothing today is more needed than just this steady adherence to the middle of the road and this focussing of attention on centrality. Nor is such a method to be confused with the commonplace born of inability to think or with timidity of soul; it in no wise falls under the charge of Prince Hal to Poins: "Thou art a blessed fellow to think as every man thinks; never a man's thought in the world keeps the roadway better than thine." It is rather that broad wisdom of common sense, based on experience of life and on familiarity with the solid achievements of the past, which enables the possessor to retain his sanity of taste against the eccentricities of critics, sometimes of high standing, who value subtlety and originality above the accepted canons of judgement. "The truth is," as Mr. Bailey says, referring to the absurd theories promulgated about some of Shakespeare's characters, "that such observations of criticism come from incapacity to endure the humiliation of seeing with all men's eyes, or telling a truth which has been told before." It is in this spirit that he wrote one of the best of his essays, on "Poetry and Commonplace".

But there is danger too in such virtue, and this shows itself in his two most-read books, the *Johnson* and the *Milton*. There are chapters in the former of these studies which could scarcely be bettered. The account of Johnson as "a national institution", as the typical Englishman, or the type of what Englishmen like to think of themselves, is wholly admirable and eminently true. And the same can be said of the chapter on Johnson's character. But at the conclusion of the earlier chapter one is a little shocked – at least I am – to read that "Johnson had himself almost every quality that makes for survival except genius; and that, by the happiest of fates for himself and for us, he found in his biographer". Now I would not for a moment be thought to subscribe to Macaulay's famous paradox, that Boswell wrote the greatest of biographies because he was the greatest of fools. Things do not happen in that way. Boswell had talent in abundance; but it is, I think, a grave misprision of judgement to overlook the fact that the biographer's glory was somewhat of a reflected sort, and that what enthralls us in his work is the genius of one he was able largely, not entirely, to comprehend – which is to allow him no small merit. The truth is that Mr. Bailey is so intent on bringing out Johnson's greatness as the supreme exemplar of common sense that he is a little blind to that in his hero which transcends the mediocre. This obtuseness is apparent in the account of Johnson as a writer. Again, there is much here that is sound and excellent, but in the end also something wanting. What one misses is anything corresponding to Hilaire Belloc's almost rhapsodic outburst over the sonorous majesty of the opening sentences of *Rasselas*.

Even more disastrous – though here Mr. Bailey simply follows in the footsteps of his predecessors – is the failure to recognize Johnson's supremacy as a thinker. Mr. Bailey has much to say about Johnson's philosophy of the commonplace; and this is well, for philosophy when it abandons such a footing in the solid experience of mankind too often loses itself in vacuity. That in a way is the law of "centrality". But Mr. Bailey does not see how deeply Johnson was versed in philosophy of a more scholastic sort and could use the wisdom of common knowledge to confute the follies of the overwise. To illustrate this I might quote many observations scattered through Johnson's works that show his familiarity with the long vagaries of metaphysical speculation. It will be sufficient to mention his *Review of a Free Inquiry Into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, which discusses and demolishes, a series of Letters written by Soame Jenyns on this central, and insoluble, problem of all philosophy. Mr. Jenyns, a friend of Johnson's, had formed a theodicy on the basis of the Stoic notion that a perfect universe must include all grades of being, each of which is but a fragment of the whole and as a fragment imperfect, and on the extension of this principle by the Arabs into a universal scheme of hierarchical subordination. Johnson's criticism is directed not to this principle of subordination, which indeed he himself maintained unflinchingly, but to the application of this law to religion in such wise as to infer a sort of cosmic determinism wherein the distinction of good and evil disappears in a mist of sentimental optimism. The odd thing is that in the whole field of modern comment on Johnson, beginning with Boswell, you will, I believe, find no adequate use of Johnson's exposure of this hoary fallacy as evidence of his wide reading in technical philosophy and of his clarity of insight. Here, if anywhere, common sense is genius. The neglect of the commentators is the more remarkable since, as I read in a note to my edition of Johnson's works, this review, when published in *The Literary Magazine*, was immediately reckoned one of the finest specimens of criticism in "our language" (it is, I dare assert, the profoundest treatment of the intolerable question *Unde Malum* in any language), and was reprinted in a small volume by itself – a circumstance that appears to have escaped Boswell's research.

Something of the same sort might be said of Mr. Bailey's *Milton*. We have a penetrating delineation of the man and a stirring presentation of the magnificence of his art; but mention of the treatise on *Christian Doctrine*, which occupied Milton's pen for years, is relegated to an appendix. Mr. Bailey fails to see – as most of his predecessors have done – that this obstinate endeavor to reduce Christianity to a cold rationalistic scheme of Arianism lies at the very center of Milton's thinking, colors all his later poetry, and is responsible for those parts of *Paradise Lost* which chill the imaginative joy of the reader.

These deductions must in honesty be made from the praise due to a fine and sound critic. But to dwell on them would be to do an injustice; and indeed my intention is to bring to notice the richness of Mr. Bailey's life rather than his scarcely recognized merits as a writer. Above all I would point to the recently published volume of his *Letters and Diaries* as a book that can be read with unflagging interest and pure delight.

He was born, as we learn from the biographical Introduction, at Norwich in 1864, of a family of some standing in the community. His school was Haileybury, from which he proceeded to New College, Oxford. His years at the university were formative of his mind and were never forgotten. As late as 1928 he writes: "To Oxford. Perfection. Strolling in Oxford, looking more like the earthly Paradise than usual – and how the air of it is drenched with emotion to me as well as beauty." On graduating he took rooms in the Temple and made a pretense of studying law. But his inherited income (he was, he says, like Gibbon "neither rich nor poor; the ideal condition for a man of letters") enabled him to devote his energies to reading and writing. This busy indolence of "a slippered man of letters", while "knocking at the doors of editors and publishers" (though not very importunately, one suspects), was protracted for nine years. Then, after a brief interval of residence in a flat with a great Coptic scholar, he took a step that altered the whole tenor of his life – or perhaps "enlarged" rather than "altered" would be the exacter term. This was his marriage to the Hon. Sarah Lyttelton, by which he was not only adopted into the circle of one of the most distinguished families of England, but through this connection was brought into intimate relations with the Cavendishes, the Talbots, Spencers, Gladstones, etc.

The father of Lady Sarah was the fourth Baron Lyttelton, the first of that title having been a well-known figure in the society of the eighteenth century and the circle of Johnson (who, however, hated "poor Lyttelton" for his "vulgar Whiggism"). His *Dialogues of the Dead* is a book, somewhat pompous no doubt, but still readable without too great an effort of the will. It was he who enlarged the family residence at Hagley, which saw so much of the best of England in his day and continued to well into the nineteenth century.

The Baron of Bailey's day was a distinguished scholar whose translations into Greek were famous, a devout churchman, and a fine gentleman. By his first wife, a sister of Mrs. Gladstone, he had twelve children, all of whom, except one who died early, either made notable marriages or themselves achieved positions of honor — as bishops, statesmen, schoolmasters, and cricketers. Some years after the death of the first wife the Baron married a second time, adding to his flock three daughters, one of whom was the Sarah of our story.

All of this family history bears closely on the subject of our essay; and in fact the best way to see the life into which Bailey was plunged is to read his edition of the *Diaries* of his wife's half-sister, who married Lord Frederick Cavendish, second son of the Duke of Devonshire and brother of the Lord Huntington who played a conspicuous, if not brilliant, part in the Gladstonian politics. Lady Frederick Cavendish's record was begun when she was only thirteen years old, gives vivid pictures of the rollicking play of the children at Hagley, continues through the period of her married life with an ever-increasing attention to affairs of public importance, and stops abruptly with the tragic murder of her husband by the Fenians of Ireland. It deals much with speeches of Gladstone, whom the author, though born a Tory, came to admire extravagantly, with the Church and charities, with great social functions, — hunting, shooting, and the like, — reading like an honor roll of all the resounding names of England. Lady Frederick's *Diaries* are in their way unique, and they throw a high light on the associations of our literary critic. Perhaps what strikes one most in this social record is the indication, everywhere present, of the strength of family ties and of personal affections beneath the glitter of pomp. They were a sincere and loving and, in a way, simple folk who gathered at Chatsworth and Harwarden and other stately mansions of the sort.

But Bailey made his own circle also among the wits and the powerful of the land. He was elected a member of the Literary Club, The Club (Johnson's), the Athenaeum, and other societies of the sort. The fragments of his *Diaries*, interspersed among the *Letters*, are brief memoranda largely of dinners at these various clubs, and would be dry enough were it not for their record of witty comments on men and affairs by his free-spoken commensals. Some of these notes will not be out of place here. One of the best of them (I have a suspicion that I have read of the incident elsewhere, and indeed it is reported by Bailey at second hand) is about "that horrid creature", Frank Harris, and Mr. (or Lord) Balfour. It was at a dinner of grave statesmen, Harris was straining to draw attention to himself, as such creatures do, and finally shouted: "The great curses of modern life are Christianity and journalism!" There was silence; and then Balfour, quietly: "Christianity of course — but why journalism?" Harris was quite extinguished. Another story is of Herbert Paul, at a country house, who put a stop to a bore's interminable talk about machinery, with the remark: "I thank God I was educated at Eton and Oxford, and have no idea why the water comes out of the pump!" With which bit of calculated insolence may be compared the observation of the Oxford fellow who was presented to Napoleon in 1802 and was asked by his brother dons what he thought of the famous general: "Oh, you could see he was not a University man." Of a different caliber is what Bailey heard from Lady Amphill, who had been taken by Bismarck into his own study, where he said to her: "You see I have not got many pictures here; there are only three: my wife, my King, and (pointing to a portrait of Disraeli) my friend." And the very last story quoted from the *Diaries* is of a scene at The Club, where Lord Grey of Fallodon related what Clemenceau had said to him of President Wilson: "*Il parle comme Jésus Christ, mais il se conduit comme Lloyd George!*"

It would take too much space to collect the amusing pictures of famous men scattered through these pages: Herbert Spencer doing gymnastic exercises with his secretary in the garden of a country place — both in top hats; Swinburne at the Arts Club being drunk and, when leaving and not able to find his own hat, trying on others and, as each proved too small for his enormous head, throwing it wrathfully on the floor and stamping on it; and other such bits of comedy and tragedy.

The heart of the book is what we see of Bailey himself, a man moving amidst all that was most attractive in that English world – a world which even then was passing away and seems of another age, yet was still powerful and in its way exquisite – a man living also his own life of literary and artistic opulence, exchanging with a few friends of kindred spirit letters full of reflections on the writers of the day and the past, and showing quick response to beauty and nobility wherever found. Particularly he was an enthusiastic admirer of good art. Almost at the beginning of the record, while he was still studying, or pretending to study, law in the Temple, there is this note in the *Diary*:

> At the Grosvenor Gallery this morning before chambers and so intensely happy that I could hardly contain myself. Such exuberant feelings of delight sometimes pass over me in Art Galleries that I realize what the Biblical "shouting for joy" means, and would give anything to be able to relieve myself in that fashion. It made me feel that I could never be a lawyer and that somehow art and letters and an imaginative life of some kind must be my life.

It is good in these days of stress and doubt and anxiety to be with such a man; for anyone who in his own way is aiming to balance his soul in peace and to grasp the comely things of life, here is a vein of refreshment and encouragement such as few contemporary biographies provide. But withal, though leisurely content is the outstanding note of the *Letters*, the writer could not entirely escape the questioning spirit of his time. In particular he was troubled by two recurring scruples. I do not mean that these were so insistent as to break the even tenor of his way, but they were there, and they are characteristic. One was religious, the other social.

Bailey was born a churchman, and all through his life remained a loyal if not enthusiastic church-goer. He professed to be, and was, religious; but like so many men of our and his age he early lost his belief in the specific dogmas of the faith. And his doubts were curiously colored by his tastes and occupations. In the central truth of Christianity he found no difficulty. "It is easy," he says, "to believe that Christ was God – and I learn to feel that more every day, I think – easy to see that the atmosphere of the Gospels is the very atmosphere of truthfulness." What troubled him was the exigencies of faith, its apparent demand, at least as it grew under the dominance of the Church, to subordinate and impoverish, if not utterly to quell, so many of the natural interests that go to make up civilization. At one time he asks himself whether "this whole conception of religion, swallowing up and destroying all the rest of life, [does] really grow out of the Gospel?" And to that question he gets no satisfactory answer. "We must have, and ought to have," he cries, "a natural, intellectual, and aesthetic life: and for none of the three does the New Testament seem to care much. Yet the supreme unprovable certainty of faith is, as Inge says, that the Ultimate is a Union of Infinite Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, in which the Three are one and perfectly harmonized, each indeed being a different light of the other, and God being each and all." But, as he hears the preachers, indeed as he reads the New Testament itself, the practice of religion calls for a kind of "suicide of civilization". To reconcile these views of faith, the intense realization of the supernatural with its spread over the whole working field of the natural, – this reconciliation evades him as "hard and distant". His only conclusion is: "We *must* find a *via media* of some sort between the way of the world and 'he that loveth his life shall lose it'."

It cannot be said that Bailey ever discovered for himself the ground of reconciliation, and indeed it is a problem that has worried many honestly religious minds without ever coming to a clear solution. And the other problem that vexed his soul at times was of a similar nature, only here the difficulty was to reconcile his way of life with the furtive demands of social equality rather than with the exorbitant claims of religion; it was concerned rather with the love of man than with the love of God. Briefly the point was this: what right had he to pursue the comfortable ways of lettered ease, plucking the fruit of so many artistic interests, through a life of almost unruffled enjoyment if not of luxury, while so many were suffering from deprivation and utter need? That hesitation, that little rift in the lute, is the theme of the first letter of the long correspondence with his intimate clerical friend, F. G. Ellerton, to whom he is to discourse so often on literary men and matters, and it is equally the theme of one of his latest of his communications with W. W. Vaughan, the headmaster of various schools.

> What you say [he writes to the latter] raises that big problem which anyone who ever thinks in terms of ethics must at least sometimes consider and never without discomfort and disturbance. . . . It is one of the few things that have ever kept me awake (not for long!), but I don't know that my waking actions have been much affected by it. In one sense or point of view the question may be asked: How can I justify spending £50 on going abroad or taking a house, or how can the State justify buying

a valuable picture, or maintaining palaces, while slums and disease and poverty exist?

Now that is a cloud that is likely to arise in the mind of anyone in Bailey's position, and it grows larger and blacker with the years, as the apparent cruelties of civilization weigh more and more upon us. But I say that, in its abstract, absolute form it is a question to be cast out as futile and presumptuous and even sacrilegious. It implies that our human, short-sighted sense of justice is endeavoring to supplant what is just by the unalterable laws of being. I do not deny that the entertainment of such scruples may have a salutary effect, if they are held to be subsidiary and not absolute. So taken, they may modify our conduct by those other laws of being which we call mercy and charity and human sympathy. Above all they may force us to reflect on that Nemesis of the Gods which lies in wait to cast down the proud and supercilious, to avenge greed, to shatter the soul that has succumbed to that insolence of prosperity to which the Greeks gave the name of *hybris.* All these benefits our qualm over the sort of justice that governs the universe, all these it may effect; but only if regarded as subsidiary. Otherwise it is a fear ignoble and cowardly; for to the Gods justice and personal responsibility are one. And this we may learn from the Buddhist doctrine of metempsychosis and Karma and from the Christian myth of the Fall and original sin.

It is not quite Bailey's way to grope after such ultimate explanations of the practical conduct of life; and his self-justification, when he looks for it, is rather of a personal sort. So in that letter to Vaughan from which I have already quoted he goes on to add: "The only thing I can say is that I believe inequality – for all its bad points – is a healthier and better and more live condition for a nation than equality: that there is much in Boissier's question which I heard him put at the Collège de France: '*Qu'est ce que c'est la civilization, Messieurs? C'est le gout du superflu.*'" This sounds like a general theory, but elsewhere the "superfluous" is connected with his own individual way of life. "I am getting to feel," he says once in his thirty-fifth year, ". . . that it is my function to read more than to write, to judge more than to do, to enjoy rather than to create. And if I believe, as I certainly do, that the existence of a class of cultivated, intelligent people is of vital importance to a country, I may surely accept this as my part and not wish for a more ambitious or more obviously useful one. . . . If one thinks what a difference in the tone of English Society would be produced if one could multiply by a hundred the people who have seriously cultivated a turn for literature and art, one cannot but realize that one has a useful part to play." That was the constant burden of his self-examination, and I do not know that a better answer can be given to the vexed question of civilization. So it was that Bailey found comfort in the pursuit of the superfluous joys of beauty and culture, to make life "as rich and full as possible, and leave our influence over others to be rather indirect and unconscious than conscious and direct". And so he took encouragement from a letter of Bruce Richmond's, as he notes in his *Diary*: "There can be no more useful work than that of 'irradiating the humanities', which he assures me I can and do daily accomplish."

There are worse apologies for apparent selfishness than that, I take it, and the leavening influence of a fine critic like Bailey, who held fast to the tradition of immaterial values amidst the materialism of an industrial society, and who in all the "superfluities" of art sought persistently for what is fair and of good report, and against the rebellious tendency to mistake extravagance for strength and eccentricity for creative originality kept resolutely the middle path of the sane and approved, – such an influence is as certain as it is incalculable. All this is in his private correspondence.

Once, and I believe once only, in his public utterances he goes beneath such personal considerations to find a philosophical and religious ground for the quiet pursuit of self-education and expression. The passage occurs appropriately in his most notable piece of critical writing, "Shakespeare's Histories", an essay first printed in *The Continuity of Letters* and afterwards transferred almost bodily to the little volume on Shakespeare in The English Heritage Series. For the essay itself I reckon it not only the best thing Bailey has done but a memorable contribution to English literature. In it are united the author's almost lyrical, but always judicious, love of England, his devotion to those writers, Johnson for instance, who have in their lives and works given expression to the traits of character that have made England, and his sensitive response to the verbal genius which, in Shakespeare and particularly in the outstanding passages of the historic plays, has wrought the stuff of such patriotism into noble poetry. I confess that the first perusal of the essay gave me a thrill such as I generally missed in Bailey's pages, even in the excellent study of Wordsworth in the same volume. Here I felt was something unique, exciting, almost ecstatic, yet guided everywhere by that sanity of common sense, that centrality of human experience, which not only enabled the critic to prick the pedantic follies of much previous interpretation of Falstaff and Prince Hal and Hotspur and the Richards, but carried him to the very heart of his subject. If I were an Englishman – nay, as I am an American – I should like to see the essay printed in a separate little volume and put into the hands of every school boy and girl of the higher grades.

And it is here, towards the close of the essay, that the critic has made a ringing plea for the life of culture in a world where culture is so beaten about by the claims of humanitarianism and equalitarianism. In the most general terms his theory flows from that principle of subordination, which, whatever its source, whether in bare necessity or in some divine law of ultimate justice based on individual responsibility, governs the hierarchical fact of being. It is the law that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Ulysses, thereby almost redeeming *Troilus and Cressida* from its grossness:

> *Take but degree away, untune that string,*
> *And, hark, what discord follows! each thing meets*
> *In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters*
> *Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,*
> *And make a sop of all this solid globe:*
> *Strength should be lord of imbecility,*
> *And the rude son should strike his father dead:*
> *Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,*
> *Between whose endless jar justice resides,*

Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
Then every thing includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself.

This, as Bailey says, was that "middling wisdom of a practical man like Shakespeare, with his eyes open to a living world". It was the wisdom of England, and came to full voice in Johnson; it was that which made Bailey himself at times to rise above his wonted level. But it is not a new thing. It is that scale of *hypotagê*, subordination, which the Stoics of Greece used and abused; it runs through the sermons of the greatest of all preachers, Chrysostom, who makes of it a theodicy without blunting the distinction of good and evil, as the Stoics had done. And these Christian poets and philosophers of the fact could look back to the New Testament. "No one," as Mr. Bailey observes, "who has read *Henry VI*, *Troilus and Cressida*, or *Coriolanus*, to say nothing of other plays, will have much doubt that Shakespeare was as clear as St. Paul, not only about the animal and spiritual equality of men, but also about their social and political inequality."

But I see myself in danger of giving a disproportionate place to these qualms of a sensitive soul. What should impress one in the *Letters and Diaries* is rather the calm of a mind that had taken a true account of life, and had chosen the better way of culture and beauty.

The Forgotten Class

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

Two millstones are grinding ponderously, steadily, and with increasing momentum, as they already have ground for just a hundred years. The nether millstone is that of organized, proletarian labor, the upper is that of organized financial, industrial, and commercial power. The energy that drives these grinding stones is organized greed, individual and corporate; the lubricant is organized power, financial, social, political; the brake that might act as control is an organized social sense that is now inoperative, its place being taken by an unorganized personal and social lethargy superinduced by that "rugged individualism" that has lost the sense of communal ideals, methods, and basic values. The upper stone represents a few thousand individuals controlling, directly or indirectly, eighty per cent of the wealth of the nation; the lower a few millions controlling nothing but an implicit power to throw the machinery out of gear, split the upper stone into fragments, and disrupt society by the threat, and ultimately by the use, of force: physical, economic, or political.

Between these two dynamic energies, as passive as these are active, lies the Forgotten Class, comprising, it may safely be assumed, a good working majority of all citizens. Their interests are not considered, the operations of Government do not take them into account; they are the victims of exploitation in the interest of the upper class or the lower. For the first time in half a century an attempt has been made (whether wise in conception and operation, or beneficent in its results, is not now the question) to consider the condition and needs of one sector of this forgotten class; a fact that is encouraging as far as it goes. It did not go very far, and progress has now been stopped by judicial decision. In any case, it was an emergency measure, applicable only temporarily and to a detail. It revealed a certain consciousness on the part of its instigators of the fact that such a class existed, and an appreciation of some of its needs, if not of its rights, but this awareness did not extend farther than the boundaries of a group of administrative officials.

Now these two factors in society, minorities both, have for half a century, directed, controlled, and determined all the affairs, social, industrial, financial, and political of the Republic. This very comprehensive work has, of course, not been accomplished through cooperation, but by radical antagonism. Each has been a menace to the other. Fear and hate have operated together to bring about a condition of military strategy, compromise, expediency — under which all questions of abstract right, concrete justice, and the welfare and wishes of the public as a whole have been ignored. The policy adopted has been that of a general in command of an army in action, or of a district attorney: to win the battle regardless of the merits of the cause; to gain conviction of the accused whether he is guilty or not. The position of the majority class that lies between the contending forces is that of Reims, Louvain, Verdun in the last war. The vicious folly of our economic system and the ineptitude of our political organism are in themselves responsible for this social conflict, as they were for the World War, and the original responsibility rests with a system. It is only a derivative responsibility that remains, on the one hand, with the representatives of money-capitalism, big business, mass production, commercial greed, and, on the other, with the representatives of labor (organized or unorganized), the veterans' organizations, and the new agrarian units. In both cases the two minority groups are quite willing to accept responsibility and act on it regardless of consequences. When national power lies, as it did for sixty years, in the hands of the upper group, it is used ruthlessly and cynically; when it falls, as it occasionally did in minor and local instances, in the hands of the nether faction, it is used in just the same way. When legal authority cannot be acquired, the sabotage and guerrilla warfare that then are the mode of action are just as unscrupulous as are the actions of the upper class.

Both groups, individually and collectively, are driven by one impulse: self-interest, worked for without regard to the general interests of the community, the nation, or the higher unity of the people as a whole.

It is easier to extenuate the policy and the procedure of the lower group than that of the higher. Both actions are barbarically anti-social, therefore immoral, but the upper class was perfectly organized and held all the vast power of aggregated wealth and the sole ability to hire the man-power that was for sale and had to be marketed to avoid starvation. It also had the hearty and potent support of Government. The lower class, which had been crushed and exploited under a century of progressive mechanization, centralization, and power-monopoly, had nothing with which to fight for a measure of justice except the not always potent threat of industrial sabotage, social dislocation, and confusion through the strike, the sympathetic strike, and the black but hollow bogey of the general strike.

However, it is not a question of grading the degrees of responsibility, indeed it is not in the end a matter of responsibility at all. Upper and lower groups are both products of a force that suddenly grew into dominating and directing power that was greater than the individual. Of this *Zeitgeist* they are the automatic product. This time-spirit is the precipitation in a sort of Olympian unity of the most extraordinary combination of diverse factors history has as yet recorded. Focalized under concrete terms these were: the Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution. By definition these three catastrophic (in the sense of sudden, almost instantaneous appearance without antecedent stages of evolution) phenomena, occurring almost simultaneously, changed the historic method of social development as this had held for five thousand years. Mind, absolved from religious sanctions and the control of authority, assumed all power; individual man asserted his individual integrity regardless of all social, dogmatic, and philosophical mandates; power of one sort or another became the object of living and this was to be won by physical force or the exercise of craft and an amoral, even cynical, ingenuity.

This combination of new powers was enough, in all conscience, to change the history of Europe, but to it was added three other factors which acted as a precipitate; the discovery of the potential in coal, iron, steam, and, a little later, electricity; the unleashing of the capacity of the human mind for mechanical invention, the exploitation of the new potential for the furtherance of the inherent acquisitiveness of mankind, and the enormous increase in the population of Europe. From the birth of Zoser, Pharoah of Egypt, to the birth of Napoleon, Europe never exceeded a population of 180,000,0000. Between that date and the birth of Henry Ford – just about a century – this had been magnified three times, to some 500,000,000, the greater part of whom were the progeny of those classes which, after the fall of the comparatively free society of Mediaeval Europe, had been depressed, stunted, mentally debased during the succeeding three centuries of Renaissance oppression.

This is that "Mass Man" whose genesis, character, and present part in world affairs, Ortega y Gasset has so acutely specified in his *Revolt of the Masses*, and it is this stock that is now represented by the terminal groups that, each after its own fashion, determines the social, economic, and political conditions under which the impotent majority is forced to live.

For the international financiers, the great captains of industry, the trade-monopolists, promoters, and high political organizers and directors, are all brothers under the skin to the labor leaders and their cohorts, the veterans' organizations, and all other groups of the lower denomination. They stem from the same trunk; that is, the solid and numerous unit of "mass men" that came into the light when the solid crust imposed by post-mediaeval society suddenly broke and the imprisoned peasantry and proletariat regained what was to prove only a nominal and fictitious liberty.

From the time when the substantially free society of the Middle Ages was liquidated, say about 1450, this class had been subjected to conditions which could only intensify, if they did not aggravate, those qualities of self-interest, cupidity, craftiness, and a resentment at an estate they neither brought upon themselves nor deserved, that instigated both a deep resentment against society, a disregard of its claims, a contempt for law, and a determination on the part of each individual to get for himself what he could. And under the circumstances you can hardly blame them. They had been under-dog long enough: now they proposed to come out on top.

Fate determined otherwise, so far as the major sector was concerned, but at the same time it offered opportunities beyond the wildest dreams for the few that saw their chance and were able to use it.

The exploitation of the unlimited power inherent in coal, iron, and steam, the development of the banking and credit and joint-stock systems that already existed in an amateurish and fairly harmless form, the raising of monopoly to the position of a high science and industrial world-order (it had already established itself in England with the suppression of the monasteries, the enclosure of the common lands, and the dominance of the wool-trade, opposition to all of which, and much more of the same kind, cost King Charles his head) demanded for its fulfillment precisely those qualities of mind and character engendered under Renaissance and Reformation dominion. The work was done to admiration.

It would be a matter of interesting but indeterminate speculation to consider what might have been the result in economic and social history if all these era-making events had not happened at the same time: if coal and iron with all their derivatives had not had this particular class to make them operative: if the emergent mass man had not found ready to his hand these potent implements of world-control. It was the – shall I say, providential – concurrence of the revelation of a new and unexampled potential and the sudden appearance of a type of man emancipated from the restraints of religion, tradition, and the sense of ethical and social responsibility that changed the history of the world. Mass man implemented, exploited, and established in power the new-found energy, hidden and inoperative in the depths of the earth for eons unnumbered. He generated, instigated, and directed the discoverers, scientists, and inventors who sprang to life at the call of Power, finally making them tributary to its methods and its great objective. This alliance of revealed potential, physical science, mechanical invention, and the mass man resulted in the briefest space of time in the greatest social and economic revolution ever recorded, as well as in one of the most stupendous and, in a sense, magnificent creations of the human mind and will. And the type of man who created this astounding phenomenon is still directing it today, whether he is the proletarian laborer at one end of the scale, or the millionaire magnate at the other. Financial-technological civilization is the proud product of the mass man.

The technocratic, finance-capitalistic State which he produced has conditioned his own development. There was nothing in it, of its own, that would tend to give him a vision of higher values. Instead it fixed his original mental and character content in a stereotyped form, at the same time vastly intensifying it along the same lines. This is what gives its peculiarly selfish and anti-social character to the two minority extremes of our social fabric, between which lies what I call the Forgotten Class. What does this class comprise?

Broadly speaking, pretty much everyone not included in the upper stratum of owners and controllers of power: financial, industrial, commercial, and the several hundred thousand technical employers, satellites, and subsidiaries whose interests are bound up with those of their employers and masters. This on the one hand; on the other proletarian, organized labor, the several veterans' organizations, and an ill-defined number of similar units that represent special interests that are in conflict with the high sector in an indecisive effort to get for themselves what they want, regardless of all social considerations.

With these must be included the generality of legislators, whether municipal, state, or national, for they also belong in the category of "mass men"; certainly by right of similarity of character, motive, and method of action, probably also by virtue of descent. As in the case of organized labor and the veterans' groups, there are amongst them, men of caliber, character and high social sense, but their paucity in numbers only serves to throw into high light the cupidity, self-seeking, and cynicism of the majority. Made up as they are now, it is safe to say that there are very few legislative chambers that, when the issue is drawn between personal or partisan interests on the one hand, and an abstract question of social or ethical right or wrong on the other, would not promptly choose the former. Witness the recent action of Congress in the matter of the soldiers' bonus.

As I shall use this phrase, "the mass man" very frequently, it may be well to insert here a general description of his nature as this is supplied by the philosopher* who, I think, has best analyzed him:

> They [the mass men] are only concerned with their own well-being, and at the same time they remain alien to the cause of that well-being. . . . That man is intellectually of the mass who, in face of any problem, is satisfied with thinking the first thing he finds in his head. . . . As one advances in age, one realizes more and more that the majority of men — and of women — are incapable of any other effort than that strictly imposed on them as a reaction to external compulsion. . . . Once for all he accepts the stock of commonplaces, prejudices, fag-ends of ideas, or simply empty words which chance has piled up within his mind, and with a boldness only explicable by his ingenuousness, is prepared to impose them everywhere. . . . The mass man is simply without morality, which is always, in essence, a sentiment of submission to something, a consciousness of service and obligation.

Such, if we are to believe not only Señor Ortega, but some six or eight of the most acute minds of the time as well as our own experience, is the general character of that mass man who now is identified with the upper and lower strata of our common life. Between these positive and negative poles lies, as I have said, the Forgotten Class.

This is a very extensive category, probably a majority of the people of this Republic. It comprises farmers, small shopkeepers, tradesmen, craftsmen, and artisans; members of most of the professional classes; teachers, followers of pure science, artists, literary men, clergy, small *rentiers*, college students, clerks, and finally the great mass of skilled and unskilled manual laborers who are not organized and have no way of exacting equity and justice from the dominant powers, except the purely theoretical and perfectly ineffective agency of the ballot.

---

* José Ortega y Gassett: *The Revolt of the Masses.*

These are they that *are* the State, or rather the social entity we call the United States of America. The minority extremes are adventitious adjuncts. They have their place and their function to perform, but only in subordination to the major unit. When, as now, they assume the power and through the political forms and agencies which they control, follow their own selfish ends regardless of the citizenry as a whole, then the State, the community, and civilization itself are in danger.

This is the class whose interests call for recognition; who, it may be, should direct and administer the State. There is no valid reason why politicians, as the operative agency of the upper and lower sectors of society, should exercise these functions. In point of fact neither they nor their overlords have done any too well, as we know now to our cost. Europe is in the same case with ourselves and there already the major part of the sovereign units has rejected the dictatorships of finance and labor through the agency of political satraps, accepting instead the dictatorship of single individuals and their juntas of hand-picked lieutenants. Thus far the result is not wholly salutary, though this may possibly better itself in time. The prospect of a similar development in America is not one to be confronted with equanimity, but it is on the cards unless we can devise something better, and that without delay.

What shall we call this forgotten class that is, numerically and in absolute value, the real America? Strictly speaking, it is the true "Middle Class", but the term has a bad connotation. When, in the nineteenth century, the more able of the emergent mass men saw and seized their opportunity to exploit the miraculously revealed new powers inherent in the elements; coal, iron, and steam; credit, shares, monopoly; and a little later, mass production, standardization, and advertising, it was they that were denominated the middle class, though with the progress of this portentous phenomenon, the cleverest and less scrupulous of all soon became the "upper class" while accomplishing only minor changes in basic character.

Here in America the word acquired a different meaning. For the first two centuries there was no middle class of any sort. There was the great mass of citizens, farmers, craftsmen, and small tradesmen, substantially a unit in intent and status, with a small class of large land-holders, squires, clergy, and teachers, together with a few great merchants, mostly engaged in sea-borne trade. There was no proletariat to speak of, no class of industrial magnates and potent financiers, and very few practical politicians of the type of Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. The statesmen, of whom there were many, were mostly squires, lawyers, scholars, or merchants who were statesmen "on the side". While the racial stock was generally that of the European mass man, it had not been subjected to the opportunities and temptations of the industrial era, which was then almost a century in the future, and conditions in the new country were in every way favorable to personal and social development along right and fruitful lines.

In England, from the death of Henry VIII to the middle years of the reign of Queen Victoria, and particularly after the execution of Charles I, the husbandman, artisan, and peasant classes had suffered a progressive oppression and degradation, but here conditions were quite the reverse. It was not until a point within memory that these salutary conditions began rapidly to change through the operation of the new financial, industrial, and commercial factors imported from England.

Once firmly fixed, the new regime of two powerful minority units, at the two poles of the social entity, revealed the majority middle class that lay between. This was essentially the old, original Americanism that had given so good an account of itself from Jamestown and Plymouth to Appomattox, and in character, capacity, and personality it stood on a far higher plane than the similar class in England after its two centuries of oppression and consequent degradation.

During the years in which money-capitalism, technological development, and industrial concentration were going strong, say from Grant to Hoover, the period of less than sixty years when the American social unity was being split up into hostile fragments, the central middle class became subject to scorn and derision. As Herbert Agar has so conclusively shown in his very revealing *Land of the Free*, this was in effect the body of men who represented the real Americanism, but they were looked on as mossbacks and hayseeds. Anyone who did not submit gracefully to being tied to the wheels of the new Juggernaut – and the middle-class Middle West with its kind at the four points of the continental compass refused to submit gracefully or otherwise – was just out of the running, and that was all there was about it. To be middle-class was about the most ignominious thing one could be. With the liquidation of the once dominant class of financiers and big business men, or at least with their dark discrediting, the once contemned class is emerging into a better light, but the connotation of the old phrase still hangs around it, though not like the scent of the roses around the shattered vase. There is much in a name and it would seem hardly wise to try to lift this particular one from the places assigned to it during the last century.

"Center Party" is equally disqualified because of its clerical significance in Germany and the unsavory implications of other parliamentary organisms; the record for compromise, juggling of principles, and of partisan chicanery is not one to be suggested, yet it remains in fact the center and the real core of the social organism. Perhaps after all "the Forgotten Class" is the best word to use.

For forgotten it is, in so far as government is concerned. That legislation which does not follow the interests of the social extremities, or is conserved for the welfare of the politicians and office-holders, is very generally carried through for the purpose of gaining the partisan support of some special group of citizens whose votes are wanted or whose voices are loudest, or under the brow-beating of fanatical tub-thumpers of the normal type of the mass man.

Nevertheless, these are they that count, or from any reasonable point of view should count, in determining the pattern of a just and vital society and fixing it on durable lines. The extremes have their part to play, but only in proportion to that rendered by other forces, and these latter must be the controlling agency. A society, the quality of which is determined by what we call capitalism (for lack of a better word to express its protean nature) is, as we have found, vicious and destructive. A society conditioned by the temper and the ways of the mass man, the so-called "dictatorship of the proletariat", would be as bad, or worse. Real values are reversed in either case; yet, at present, all we can find in contemporary social organisms, is a condition imposed by one or the other or, which is probably worse, a sort of compromised, negative system built on political expediency as the quite futile result of the conflict between the two.

There is no sane reason why the social unit should be harmed and the culture of a time determined by either one or by both in their very sordid and unhandsome war. Can we hope for better things from the Forgotten Class? The hope, I think, is good, but I have to admit that, with things as they are, the transfer of power seems hardly more than an academic proposition, unless one or the other of the agencies now responsible for one very silly sort of life, destroys itself through its very excesses, or the two together follow the precedent set by the Kilkenny cats.

I do not think we realize the numbers of this "saving remnant" which is yet the numerical majority, while its components have no idea whatever of the substantial identity of their interests. The vicious process of fission has gone about to the limit. The small farmer cannot see that he is in the same box with college professors, teachers, and students. The small tradesmen have no sense of common interests between themselves and the independent artisans and the artists of all sorts. The reverend clergy, the clerks, and employees of the professions, and the members of the professions themselves cannot see that their interests are identical. Technicians, philosophers, scientists, shop assistants, naval and army officers with the men under them; governmental employees in city, state and nation, journalists, literary men, and unorganized skilled labor are all, so far as their fundamental interests are concerned, brothers under the skin. They don't know it, nor the power that could be exercised through unity, yet it is just here that we must look for the agency that has the inherent energy, character, and ability that can redeem society and State and start them going again on decent lines.

(*To be concluded*)

Looking Down the Cotton Row

GEORGE MARION O'DONNELL

NOT long ago cotton-growing in the South was a Big Business venture that paid well, because cotton was a good export product, demanded on the markets of the world, and the South was the part of the world best suited to cotton-production. Banks and holding companies found it worth their while to capitalize the production of cotton; and resident Southern landowners took to planting more and more of their land in cotton. It was an era of mass production.

These Big Business planters found land cheap and labor plentiful. And they found, all ready for their purpose, the system of farm tenancy which grew up after the Civil War as a substitute for slavery. The system works about like this:

The planter contracts with tenants to work on his land, providing each of them with a house. And through the production months he "furnishes" the tenants: he allows them a certain amount of money each month, he allots them groceries and clothes from his own commissary, or he gives them orders for supplies to be charged against the plantation account at a store in the nearest town. These payments, with interest, he charges against the tenants on the plantation books.

If the tenant is a share-cropper, or "half-hand", he supplies only labor; at the end of the year, tenant and planter each receives half of the crops. If he is a "third-

and-fourth" hand, the tenant furnishes everything necessary to the making of a crop except land; at the end of the year the landowner is entitled to one third of the corn and one fourth of the cotton as rent. Under a third type of tenant-planter contract, the tenant pays a fixed sum of money per acre as rent; and he usually supervises his own farming operations.

Opportunities for abuses under this system should be apparent at once: the planter keeps the books; the planter alone knows the true prices of supplies; the planter is his own boss in fixing interest rates on plantation accounts, rates which sometimes run as high as forty per cent.

Of course any Southern planter is inevitably exploited by a financial system which was practically forced on the South after the Civil War, and which is often the real villain responsible for the exploitation of tenants. But some planters have connived with the system, deliberately turning from traditional farming principles and exploiting both their land and their tenants in order to share in the great profits that might be derived from cotton under a money economy. These are the Big Business planters to whom I refer.

More important than financial abuses, perhaps, are the unfortunate living conditions among tenants on many great Southern cotton plantations. Let us look at a large establishment – say in the Mississippi Delta, which shares with Texas the questionable distinction of having more large plantations than any other section of the South.

There is a group of buildings which constitutes the main office of the establishment – barns, garages, manager's house, commissary. Around this group of buildings lie the fields, neatly divided by well-kept roads. Tenant houses dot the fields, perhaps trim and efficient-looking, but more often rundown, unpainted, lacking shingles, with chimneys leaning at an angle to the house wall. Almost invariably they are without adequate yards or shade-trees or outhouses. A garden – so wisdom runs here – would remove from use land that might be planted in cotton. Trees, if allowed at tenant houses, will occasionally shade the ends of cotton rows nearby. Barns are not needed, for the landlord owns all the mules, or all the tractors, and he keeps them all at the big modern barn near the manager's house. Front yards are generally small and unfenced: small because the landlord does not want to sacrifice any of his land, unfenced because there are no woodlands on the place from which to get fence palings. Here is the tenant farmer's house; to call it a home would be impious.

In such conditions many of the Southern tenant farmers live on the great plantations. These people are on the soil, to be sure, but they are essentially industrial workers – and badly treated industrial workers at that. The instruments of production are all controlled and manipulated for profit by the capitalist (the landlord); the labor is hard, uniform, and regular, though not so unvarying as the work in a factory; farmers are not attached to the soil by emotional ties; the whole system is "efficient" and impersonal.

Improperly fed and clothed, living in a house improperly heated in winter and open to the terrible Southern heat in summer, cheated by landlords, uneducated, perhaps diseased, the tenant continues to work in the hope that the next year he may get out of debt, the next year the price of cotton may rise, some day he may own a home.

Moreover, in recent years the troubles of the tenants have been aggravated. Tractors are replacing man-and-mule power in Big Business cotton-farming; and the planters need fewer tenants. In Mississippi, on one plantation owned by absentee landlords, twenty families were evicted: their services were no longer needed, since the work of cultivation could be done by two or three men with tractors, and day-labor could be hired for the chopping and picking seasons. The evicted tenants asked for permission to stay on in the plantation houses, which would be unoccupied. But no, the company didn't want them on the place; they would have to look for homes elsewhere. Still more evictions have resulted from the complete shutting-down of plantations for one or two years under depression conditions.

Yet it is unwise to assume that tenant farming is invariably vicious, or that tenants always live in unbearable conditions. On other plantations, operating alongside of the plantations devoted to mass production of cotton, and in enforced competition with them, tenant and planter share together in an agrarian economy, the economy of men who love the land and who derive their whole sustenance from it. Labor is varied, crops are diversified, and the aim of the work is not to make enormous profits, but to induce the land to give up its riches that men may live and be happy.

On these places there is a larger percentage of renting tenants than elsewhere. Big Business planters prefer share-croppers to "third-and-fourth" hands or money renters, sometimes refusing even to enter into a renting contract; but the agrarian planter is glad to see his tenants provide their own mules, their own implements, their own seed. That the renting tenant enjoys a status higher than that of the share-cropper is clear; the renter needs nothing but land to enable him to leave the tenant class entirely.

But agrarian planters still have to depend upon cotton for tax money and for cash to purchase supplies which may not be produced conveniently at home. And, selling cotton on a market glutted because of the overproduction of Big Business growers, they find it difficult to retain their own way of farming — there is upon them a constant pressure to desert agrarianism for specialized cotton-production.

II

One does not need to be a prophet to see that the whole system of mass production in cotton is eventually doomed. The system depended upon Southern domination of the world cotton supply, and that domination is a thing of the past. Annually, the world supply of cotton fiber becomes more broadly distributed. In 1929, the world consumption of Indian cotton was ten million bales, and in this year the world used only fourteen million bales of Southern cotton. The Egyptian Sudan, Uganda, Asiatic Turkey, Asiatic Russia, and, lately, Brazil, are other competitors with the Southern crop on the world market. Labor in all of these places is cheaper than labor in the South; accordingly, foreign planters can afford to accept on the world market a lower price for cotton than the Southerner (buying on a protected domestic market) can take profitably. This morning the average Liverpool price for cotton is about six cents per pound; at the most conservative estimate, this cotton would cost six cents per pound to produce in the Southern cotton area!

Now a great many Southerners (for whom Mr. Peter Molyneaux, of *The Texas Weekly*, is a vigorous spokesman) believe that if the tariff were only reduced, the problem of the export market would be solved. They reason like this, I suppose: Lower the tariff, giving Europe a favorable balance of trade; then Europe can buy more American raw materials, including cotton; moreover, cotton-producers can import goods at world market prices.

This reasoning looks sound. A year or two ago it would have looked even more sound. But there are difficulties with this reasoning now. First, the scheme would work havoc with the standard of living in our industrial centers. Second, much of the European profit would not be invested in American raw materials at all, but in American stocks – witness the manner in which Europe recently disposed of the twenty million dollars it received when the United States purchased foreign gold. And third, even granting that the lowering or the abolition of the tariff would operate to aid Southern cotton-planters, one must recognize that this tariff revision cannot be accomplished without a political change of such magnitude as to appear Utopian.

But the Government farm program! Well, the Government is hardly concerned with the restoration of a market for unlimited production of cotton fiber: it is hardly concerned with propping up the Big Business plantation. (Consider the widespread disapproval of the AAA among great landowners who howled for "liberty" – to work toward their own doom!) On the contrary, the whole purpose of the administration farm program has been to remove more and more land from cotton-production and to use this land in the growth of food crops for home consumption.

However, even the defunct AAA did not solve the problem of the oversupply of cotton on the American market. The world carry-over of American cotton last August 1st was around nine million bales – still three million bales larger than the average annual carry-over in the period 1922-32 in spite of the acreage reduction effected by the Government farm program. And it seems safe to predict that the Government cannot permanently subsidize any crop by guaranteeing a certain price.

Under the conditions imposed by Big Business planters in financial straits, particularly under the constant threat of eviction, the tenant farmers of the South are growing restless, manifesting their discontent in the organization of tenant farmers' unions and in open revolt against the landlords. Whether or not this attempt at unionization is wise, it is clearly an important sign of the times, pointing to the collapse of the "King Cotton" plantation system.

Labor is revolting against Big Business agricultural methods; it is causing trouble. So is the land. Soil wears out when cotton is planted on it year after year; it grows white and thin; the cotton stalks are so small that workers have to crawl down the rows on hands and knees at picking time. Everywhere leaching and erosion destroy the soil. And the time is past when the planter could desert the land which he had worn out and move on to new, uncultivated acres. Today, the planter must stop exploiting the land, or the land itself will stop him.

Faced with the possible collapse of foreign trade and an oversupply on the domestic market, saddled with debt under the very financial system with which he has connived, threatened with the revolt of his labor and of his land, the Big Business planter – like many another Big Business executive – is in a desperate situation. And it appears that the whole cotton-growing industry, the agricultural South, must change its way of life considerably.

III

We have already noticed the agrarian plantation operating (at a disadvantage, to be sure) alongside the Big Business plantation in the cotton area. But there is another kind of farm tradition which has been almost entirely neglected in general discussion of Southern farm problems.

Yeoman is a good, healthy, Anglo-Saxon word for the sort of farmer who lives within this tradition; yeoman means a lesser freeholder who cultivates his own land, and it has connotations of independence, character, and bravery which it is well not to forget.

Now the yeoman farmer in the Southeast has always existed, in hill country and in delta country alike, though he has existed in larger numbers in the hill sections. The yeoman was of the frontier tradition in the Old South, not of the great slave-holding tradition. Before the Civil War, he owned his land, and he worked on his land himself. Perhaps he had a few slaves to help him, but his slaves were no burden to him, and his cotton crop was not of overbearing importance. His interest was in making for himself a home, in possessing a way of life marked by liberty, a way of life in which he could pursue his own happiness.

The yeoman did not pass with the frontier; he has not passed today. But he stands alone, completely apart from modern capital-labor terminology; neither Communism nor Fascism knows him. He is at once a capitalist (since he owns his own land, and since he may have a tenant or so) and a laborer (since he himself works on the land); yet he is neither, in the strict sense of the word, since his main concern is not to exploit his capital and his labor for a money income, but to use them in making a living in goods.

It is chiefly to the yeoman farmer that the cotton-growing South must look for its salvation; it is for his benefit that plans must be made. Heretofore, he has worked at a disadvantage, being forced always to plant more and more cotton in order to get enough money to pay high taxes and to buy the things that he could not produce for himself, and being compelled to live under an economic system which operated solely in terms of money.

This change of emphasis – toward the yeoman farmer and away from the planter – seems to be an economic necessity. Luckily, the life of the yeoman is in itself a good life. He possesses liberty based on property – the only true liberty. He is assured of permanence, of variety in his work, of healthy conditions of labor. Moreover, he is freed from dependence upon the unpredictable fluctuations of prices in the markets of the world. He is neither poor nor rich; he is neither grooved in a semi-servile occupation with no hope of advancement, nor is he engaged in a mad struggle for economic power. And the increased division of the land among independent farmers will mean natural restriction of cotton production to American consumption needs; it will mean that land will be built up through diversification; it will mean that the economic status of tenant farmers can be raised.

The yeoman farmer is the key to the solution of the main problems in Southern agriculture. And the solution will prove of benefit to the entire nation. A good life is possible in the South — generally possible, I mean, for in some sections of the South it is an accomplished fact — if the emphasis is shifted from the plantations working for mass production of cotton to the agrarian plantations and to the small farms operated by yeomen.

It is important to remember that this is not a new thing; it is merely the restoration of a traditional pattern of life too long neglected. Nor does one turn back the clock when he adopts a plan for living that was not devised the day before yesterday.

IV

The prospect is pleasant. And it would be pleasant to end the discussion of the cotton problem here, as though the general utilization of subsistence-farming methods throughout the cotton area would come about easily and naturally within the next few years. But many obstacles stand in the way of the yeoman farmer and the agrarian planter, and these problems require consideration.

The question of taxation arises, a difficulty of which every would-be subsistence farmer is conscious. According to Department of Commerce statistics, the cotton States have an excessively high State debt. And these statistics do not include the county debts which usually represent an even more important factor in determining tax rates. For instance, in the year 1934 the State *ad-valorem* tax levied by Mississippi was five mills; in some counties, the tax rate on land would have been eighty mills had the county attempted to pay off its obligations (in principal and interest on bonds) for that year. Even choosing to default on their bond payments of principal, some of the counties still had tax rates as high as fifty mills!

This means that the owner of a hundred-acre farm, assessed at fifty dollars an acre, paid about two hundred and seventy-five dollars in taxes for 1934. Now at its highest, cotton was selling for ten cents per pound in this year. On his farm, then, our farmer had to raise seven bales of cotton to pay his taxes alone.

Under this system of taxation, subsistence farming becomes impossible; the farmer is forced to rely more and more on his money crop (cotton) in order to pay his taxes, or he is forced to borrow heavily, mortgaging his land and ultimately forfeiting it.

There is one community in Mississippi, for example, where a few years ago there were ten farms operated by yeomen within three or four miles. Rising from the tenant-farmer class and buying their own farms, these men were independent, capable, sturdy. But taxes became higher and higher as the road-building fever of the twenties attacked their county. Today, every one of these yeomen is a tenant once more; his land belongs to a bank from which he borrowed money to pay taxes.

An analysis of the nature of the county debt in most of the high-tax counties of the South will show, I believe, that the greatest single cause of the high-tax burden is road bonds (in Mississippi, for example, seventy-five per cent). Flood protection, for the Delta counties of Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana, constitutes another substantial item. And county-school bonds add to the county debt.

It is probable that this situation can be relieved only if the National Government takes over a large part of this indebtedness. And in the case of the road bonds this seems only just. Most of these bonds represent paved highways for interstate traffic or for long-distance traffic within the State. Meanwhile, the farmers use gravel or dirt roads for the greater part of their hauls, since the paved highways are as straight and as central as possible. Busses, interstate trucking lines, tourists – these enjoy the highways while the farmer pays for them in land taxes.

That the National Government should finance the building of levees and the digging of drainage canals in the river States seems reasonable. The floods in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana are invariably caused by the condition of the Mississippi River, the control of which should be a national project; and the expense of local flood protection (made necessary by the failure of the Government properly to solve the Mississippi River flood problem) should not be assessed against the farmers who happen to be threatened with overflows.

These relief measures on the part of the Federal

Government would do much to make the tax burden in the cotton States tolerable. The manufacturing States will be unenthusiastic; but it is fair to point out that a manufacturing economy naturally exploits an agrarian economy, and that it should contribute something to the support of the agrarian economy without which it could not exist. Besides, the agricultural economy in the South has always suffered in order that the industrial economy of the East might have special privileges in tariff protection.

The subsistence farm is desirable in Southern agriculture. Yes, says the skeptic, but a great deal of the land in the South is now concentrated in the hands of big owners, planters who do not wish to practice an agrarian economy since they look for some miraculous restoration of profits in cotton. How is this land to be transferred to the people who would like to own subsistence farms?

On the agrarian plantation – the place where an agrarian policy is the rule and where tenants are treated as co-workers by the planters – this question is easily settled. On plantations of this kind, the owner is usually ready to sell parts of his land, particularly the rich cut-over land which may be cleared and made ready for cultivation with comparative ease. He is willing to sell this land at a fair price, on terms. And if the renting tenant were rid of the tax problem (and if he had a respectable homestead exemption), he could buy his own land easily enough, live on it, cultivate it with subsistence-farming methods, and so establish a home for himself.

In the case of the Big Business planter, other measures are needed to secure the gradual return of the land to the people. For one thing, the tax on excess production of cotton which was a part of the Bankhead Act would have done a great deal toward encouraging the Big Business planter to adopt an agrarian economy. In time it might even have brought him to consider selling some of his land to his tenants!

Dr. Frank L. Owsley, writing in The American Review for March, 1935, suggests a program for restoring the land to the people, and transforming worthy tenants into yeomen, which should be considered carefully:

> Now, instead of the Federal or state government spending $2500 in building a house for the homesteaders, with whom they are very gingerly experimenting, and several hundred dollars on small tracts of land, let the national and state governments buy up all the lands owned by insurance companies and absentee landlords — which are being destroyed rapidly by erosion — and part of the land owned by the large planters who are struggling to save a portion of their lands, and give every landless tenant who can qualify 80 acres of land, build him a substantial hewn log house and barn, fence him off twenty acres for a pasture, give him two mules and two milk cows and advance him $300 for his living expenses for one year. By this means 500,000 persons can be rehabilitated in one year at $1,500 a family or $300 per person. An outright gift of the land is advocated to the homesteader with one condition attached: the land must never be sold or mortgaged, and when abandoned it should automatically escheat to the state which should be under immediate obligation to rehabilitate another worthy family.

In any such program, of course, one must remember that not all tenants are capable of operating farms for themselves, not all tenants are capable of working without careful supervision. These people are good workers under proper supervision; they will be useful as tenants on the agrarian plantations, and it is there that they will be left. Thus the plan is a flexible one; it does not attempt to produce an equalitarian state, in which each man owns the same number of acres and no man can ever own more. But the plan does attempt to insure, to every worthy farmer who wants to be independent, that liberty which comes with the ownership of real property.

However, we must not expect the change to be a sudden one, transforming the pattern of Southern life in one year or in five years. The Southern farmer is by nature suspicious of rapid change and justly resentful of any attempt to turn him into an efficient unit in a highly organized society. And no program can be either successful or desirable if it ignores the temperament or the traditional modes of living characteristic of the farmer himself.

Besides tax relief and new opportunities to secure land, the would-be subsistence farmer needs cheap electric power. The National Government has already made a good start toward furnishing the farmer such power, in its work with the Tennessee Valley Authority. And the small farmer would probably welcome an extension of TVA, or similar activities.

Experimentation in crops and their adaptability to soils in the cotton States can also do the subsistence farmer a great deal of good. What new crops can he plant with reasonable expectation of a good yield? Are there new crops to replace cotton in the alluvial deposits of the Mississippi Delta country, or in the red clays of Alabama, or in the sandy loam of North Carolina? Our scientists can determine this for the subsistence farmer. Already they have done much, and the farmer has found out much for himself. But he needs to know a great deal more about these matters.

Of the great difficulties confronting the yeoman farmer then, all may be solved by political action. Taxes on land must be lowered in certain areas; land must be distributed, sensibly and gradually; money must be provided for scientific investigation of new crop possibilities; cheap electric power must be provided; the right kind of agricultural schools must be established. Here are problems for the National Government; here are the matters with which our political leaders must deal if they are interested in a healthy Southern agrarianism to replace the cotton-growing industry.

V

In the rocky hill country of Arkansas there lives a man who provides us with a complete example of how the agrarian economy works in practice; his farm is in itself an answer to the question: How can it be done? This man does not stand alone in the South; in fact he is typical enough to be worth detailed consideration.

Three years ago, George Smith wanted to make a home for himself on a farm. He and his wife moved to land which had been homesteaded by his great-grandfather. The first year they lost money because they tried to raise only cotton and corn. But the next year they began to try a live-at-home program. And this is their story, as reported in a large Southern newspaper:

> When they moved to the present farm . . . they had a a two-and-a-half-room house, no lights, no fencing to amount to anything, no running water, and only a barn.
>
> During the year, Mr. Smith and his wife . . . added two rooms to their home with only a little help. . . .
>
> Through a little trading, Mr. Smith bought an old store and used the lumber for his house. He traded two pigs for an electric system and bought wire from an abandoned miniature golf course and wired his house and the shops about the house. He also acquired a pressure tank for his running water.
>
> From bare necessities of the first year, he has in three years completed his model home. Take a look now. From the outside the home looks like any other farm house in the community. But inside there is a different story.
>
> The living room has been floored with narrow white pine, stained in its natural color. Two window seats that serve as chests are beneath each of the front windows. Mr. Smith made them himself. The large open fireplace is modern and inviting, with large logs ablaze. In one corner is a radio and telephone. Several chairs, a couch, book-racks, and a table make the room cozy.
>
> The bedroom is not floored with finished flooring, but the floor is immaculate and the furnishings modern, even to the bed-light. A smaller bedroom is west of the living room. The kitchen is almost a show place. . . .
>
> Outside, a few feet from the steps, is the insulated storage house for canned foods, potatoes, and onions. Mr. Smith has a well-built garage for his truck. . . . The well-house is well-built and modern. To the rear of the garage is Mr. Smith's work shop with everything in its place. Nothing is scattered, all the tools are in their

places. He had only a hammer and a saw when he moved there.

He has a forge where he makes nearly all the tools he needs. He has a pair of pruning shears that are "better than I could buy". They were made from a couple of automobile springs. On the creek he has built a hog-scalding vat where one man can clean a hog easily. He is glad to let his neighbors use it. Mr. and Mrs. Smith look after the entire farm, the chickens, the cows, and the gardens.

And this is within the very State in which the tenant farmers' union started, growing out of unrest among workers on large cotton plantations!

It will be interesting to see what Mr. Smith planted on his farm last year. On one patch of ground he had ten acres of cotton, followed by vetch; next year this ground will be planted in corn. He had ten acres of corn, to be followed next year by cotton. There was a seven-acre peach orchard, sown to lespedeza for soil improvement, erosion prevention, and seed. There were nine more acres of lespedeza, which is useful not only for soil improvement but as a forage. There were permanent pastures, sown in hop clover, white clover, lespedeza, Bermuda grass, and Dallas grass. There were permanent meadows. Certain areas were planted in oats, followed by soy beans. And, besides, there were crops of popcorn, peanuts, Hegari, sorghum, Laredo soy beans, and cow peas.

Food crops for the farm-workers, food crops for animals, crops for soil enrichment, money crop in moderate quantity, a larder full of provisions for the winter months: here is good living.

Nor does this way of life require that those who follow it be isolated. On the contrary, Mr. and Mrs. Smith are prominent in the activities of their home county; they are respected, useful citizens.

Now it would be strange if there were not a great many other people in the South just as anxious as Mr. Smith to have homes and farms. But they must have land first; they must have a tax burden that does not oppress them; they must have government help of some sort in order to get their start. (Mr. Smith was considerably benefited by the AAA, which rented part of the land which he had formerly planted in cotton.) Under the Owsley plan, or under some other plan of similar nature and of similar respect for traditional Southern patterns of life, small farmers may be so assisted; and so to assist small farmers, so to assist tenants in becoming yeomen, is to restore liberty based on property.

Buddha and the Occident

Part II

Irving Babbitt

It is in their respective attitudes towards the unconscious that the difference between a genuine supernaturalist like Buddha and the primitivist is especially manifest. The primitivist is ready to surrender to the swarming images of the unconscious at the expense both of his intellect and of his higher will, in the hope that he may thus enjoy a sense of creative spontaneity. Buddha, on the contrary, would put the intellect, felt as a power of discrimination, in the service of the higher will. He holds that it is possible by this cooperation to explore the unconscious, uncovering and finally eradicating the secret germs that, if allowed to develop freely, will result in future misery. Insight, as Buddha understands it, is marked by an increasing awareness. It is at the opposite pole from the diffuse reverie that has been so encouraged by our modern return to nature. A man's wisdom is measured by the extent to which he has awakened from the dream of sense. Goethe is very Buddhistic when he says that error bears the same relation to truth that sleeping does to waking. The very word Buddha means the Awakened. "Right awareness" is indeed the seventh stage of the Buddhist "path", immediately preceding the final stage of "right meditation".

We come here to what is for Buddha fundamental in religion. To many things that have been regarded as indispensable in other faiths – for example, prayer and belief in a personal deity – he grants a secondary place or even no place at all; but without the act of recollection or spiritual concentration he holds that the religious life cannot subsist at all.

Certain scholars have tended to emphasize the relationship between the Samkhya and Yoga Philosophies and Buddhism. Too little is known, however, about the historical development of the Hindu philosophical systems to justify one in asserting any specific borrowings from them on the part of Buddha. Moreover, as I have already pointed out, Buddhism is in its true spirit not a philosophical system at all but a "path". If one takes, however, Yoga, not in its systematic but in its psychological sense, one is justified in affirming a deep kinship between it and Buddhist teaching. In this psychological sense India, from a period even far anterior to Buddha, has been dominated, – one is at times tempted to say, obsessed, – by the idea of Yoga. One will be helped in understanding this word by keeping in mind its etymology which relates it to the Latin *jugum* and our word yoke. Metaphorically a man practices Yoga when he yokes or reins in the impulses of the natural man, though the term is usually reserved for the putting forth of this special quality of will in meditation. The yoking of self in meditation is at times compared to the actual yoking of horses or oxen. Buddha himself is described with some justification in one of the later Buddhist writings as the great *yogi*.

A religious teacher cannot be explained merely in terms of environment. He does, however, presuppose an immense previous development, the turning of the attention of a multitude of men in a given direction, in this case to the quality of will, by which man may transcend his natural self. In much the same way the appearance of a Darwin or a Pasteur is not explained by the primary concentration on the natural order that has been under way in the Occident for several centuries past; it does, however, presuppose some such development. Buddha is supposed to have received from previous masters of Yoga an initiation into all the stages of meditation with the exception of the last or Nirvānic stage. This last stage is declared by Buddha, who is not in general friendly to absolutes and ultimates, to work that final emancipation from the transitory at which the whole doctrine aims. From this point of view Nirvāna has been the subject of much, and, as it seems to the Buddhist, unintelligent discussion in the Occident.

As a rule, the Western student is repelled by Nirvāna, to which he gives a nihilistic interpretation, and at the same time is attracted by Buddha's compassionateness. Buddha taught a boundless love, it would appear, that had as its goal mere nothingness. One must, however, if one is to avoid grave misunderstanding, interpret both "love" and Nirvāna with reference to the special quality of will put forth in meditation. As I have already said, this will is in all its aspects a will to refrain and in its more radical aspects a will to renounce. What the Buddhist renounces are the expansive desires. Nirvāna is, in its literal meaning, the going out or extinction of these desires – especially of the three fires of lust, ill-will, and delusion. The notion that what ensues upon this extinction is mere emptiness is not genuinely Buddhistic. The craving for extinction in the sense of annihilation or non-existence (*vibharatanhā*) is indeed expressly reprobated in the Buddhist writings. The Buddhist quest is at bottom not for mere cessation but for the eternal. Negatively Nirvāna is defined as "escape from the flux", positively as the "immortal element". Strictly speaking, what is above the flux cannot be defined in terms of the flux, and "mind" is for Buddha an organ of the flux.

Anyone therefore who demands at the outset a firm intellectual formulation of Nirvāna has, from the Buddhist point of view, missed the point. The notion of Nirvāna that one may get in this way has about as much value, to use an image that Buddha employs in a slightly different connection, as the theories that a chick that has not broken its way through its shell might form of the outside world. The important fact is that the chick is able to peck its way through the shell; even so, says Buddha, man has the power of will, if he would but exercise it, to tread the path and achieve its fruition. If one inquire as to the nature of this fruition one is simply told that the saint can no longer be confined in the categories of ordinary consciousness; he has become "deep, immeasurable, unfathomable like the mighty ocean".

Though the nature of this fruition cannot be defined abstractly it can to some extent be described psychologically and concretely; all the more so in that Nirvāna is normally attained in the present life. According to Pascal, those alone deserve commendation who have succeeded in combining properly a sense of man's grandeur with a sense of his misery. Buddha seems to deserve this commendation, though his way of conceiving of man's grandeur in particular is not altogether in consonance with Christianity. This grandeur consists in the fact that the Buddhas appear as men and that the human state is in general more favorable than any other to the attainment of sanctity.

Not merely Buddha himself, but many of his followers are supposed to have achieved Nirvāna and to have been in a position to compare this experience with what may be experienced in ordinary consciousness. We have already seen that Buddha subordinated the first of Kant's three questions, "What can I know?" to the second, "What must I do?" A similar subordination appears in his answer to the third question, "What may I hope?" Pope has told us, in a verse of doubtful syntax, that man never is but always to be blessed. Buddha, on the contrary, aims at a present blessedness and does not encourage one to entertain any hope that is likely to divert one from this blessedness and the kind of effort by which it is attained. It goes without saying that he did not cherish the humanitarian hope: he did not, like the youthful Wordsworth, make "society his glittering bride", or like Tennyson look forward to a "far-off divine event". He was free from the nostalgic longing, the vague outreaching of the imagination with which this type of hope has been so often associated. Compared with that perfect emancipation of the spirit at which he aims, even the older form of hope, that of bliss in a world to come, is deemed unworthy of the true disciple:

The strong gods pine for my abode,
And pine for me the sacred seven:
But thou, meek lover of the good,
Find me and turn thy back on heaven.

One should add that the "Nirvāna here and now" (*Samditthakam Nibbanam*) of the Buddhist has much in common with the "release in this life" (*jivanmukti*) of the Hindu philosopher. One may, however, affirm confidently that no religious teacher was ever more opposed than Buddha in his scheme of salvation to every form of postponement and procrastination. He would have his followers take the cash and let the credit go – though the cash in this case is not the immediate pleasure but the immediate peace.

The peace in which the doctrine culminates is not, the Buddhist would insist, inert but active, a rest that comes through striving. In general the state that supervenes upon the turning away from the desires of the natural man is not, if one is to believe the Buddhist, a state of cool disillusion. One may apply to it, indeed, the term enthusiasm, though the enthusiasm is not of the emotional type with which we are so familiar, but rather of the type which has been defined as "exalted peace". Buddha himself seems to speak from an immeasurable depth of calm, a calm that is without the slightest trace of languor. The innumerable images of the founder of the faith scattered throughout the Far East strive to render this effect of meditative tranquility, at times, as in the great Buddha of Kamakura with notable success.

Anyone who like Buddha does not indulge "the desire of the moth for the star", and the psychic restlessness that it encourages, is likely to seem to an Occident permeated with romanticism to lack not merely poetry but religion. Mr. Chesterton, for example, seeks to prove, from this point of view, the superiority of the Christian over the Buddhist saint. "The Buddhist saint," he says, "always has his eyes shut, while the Christian saint always has them very wide open. The Buddhist saint has a sleek and harmonious body, but his eyes are heavy and sealed with sleep. The mediaeval saint's body is wasted to its crazy bones, but his eyes are frightfully alive. The Buddhist is looking with peculiar intentness inwards. The Christian is staring with frantic intentness outwards", etc. There are no doubt saints and saints. The London papers published a few years ago the following dispatch from India: "A new saint has appeared in the Swāt Valley. The police are after him." But a saint, whether Buddhist or Christian, who knows his business as a saint is rightly meditative and in proportion to the rightness of his meditation is the depth of his peace. We have it on an authority which Mr. Chesterton is bound to respect that the kingdom of heaven is within us. It would be interesting to hear Mr. Chesterton explain how a saint can find that which is within by "staring frantically outwards".

Failing like many others to discriminate between romanticism and religion, Mr. Chesterton has managed to misrepresent both Buddhism and Christianity. The truth is, that though Christianity from the start was more emotional in its temperament than Buddhism, and though an element of nostalgia entered into it from an early period, it is at one in its final emphasis with the older religion. In both faiths this emphasis is on the peace that passeth understanding.

Matthew Arnold is therefore infelicitous from both a Christian and a Buddhist point of view in defining religion merely as morality touched by emotion. The numerous persons who have seen in the original teaching of Buddha in particular only the ethical element have been guilty of grave misapprehension. The path to religion leads through morality – on this point Buddha is most explicit; but as one approaches the goal one enters into an entirely different element: the saint who has attained the Nirvānic calm is, we are told repeatedly, "beyond good and evil".

The confusion regarding the relation of religion in general and Buddhism in particular to emotion is still more serious. The Western student, I have said, is likely to be repelled by Nirvāna but is almost invariably attracted by the prominence Buddha gives to love or compassion. It is not as a matter of fact easy to overemphasize this side of his teaching. "The boundless good-will" that he urges us to cultivate, "even as a mother at the risk of her life watches over her own child, her only child", embraces not only man but the whole animate world. Buddhist love can, however, like Nirvāna, be understood only in connection with the special form of activity that is put forth in meditation. It does not well forth spontaneously from the natural man but is, like Christian charity, the supernatural virtue *par excellence*. The current confusion on this point is perhaps the most striking outcome of the sentimentalism of the eighteenth century and of the emotional romanticism of the nineteenth century that prolonged it. This confusion may be defined psychologically as a tendency to substitute for a superrational concentration of will a subrational expansion of feeling. How many persons, for example, exalt the "love" of St. Francis who, in their total outlook on life, are almost inconceivably remote from the humility, chastity, and poverty from which, in the eyes of St. Francis himself, the love was inseparable! The emotionalists have been busy with even more august figures than St. Francis, for example with Christ himself. They have also inclined, although this tendency is less familiar, to interpret Buddha subrationally. The latter tendency is probably best exemplified in Schopenhauer who founds ethics upon a distinctly subrational sympathy (or pity) and then proceeds to associate this type of sympathy with Buddha and with the wisdom of the East in general. Schopenhauer knew little about the authentic teaching of Buddha, but his error is so fundamental that it is doubtful whether he would have corrected it even if he had been more adequately informed.

The real Buddha, I have tried to make clear, though an enthusiast, was not an emotionalist. For the Buddhist, emotion, like morality, lies on the way to religion; but as one approaches the goal one enters, as I have said, into a different element — an element of unalloyed calm. It would never have occurred to Buddha and his early followers to measure a man's humanity, much less his religion by his "droppings of warm tears". The tears shed by Ananda, the favorite disciple, on learning from the Master of his approaching end, tears that seem to us so touching, were regarded by the Arhats or true saints as a mark of his spiritual immaturity. They had been so schooled in the truths of impermanence that they were not to be shaken even by the passing of a Buddha. A religious peace so perfect as this seems to us to exclude tenderness to a degree that is slightly inhuman. For the Buddhist, however, the peace and a love that has grown "great" and "immeasurable" have a common source – namely, a right use of meditation.

Moreover one should not forget that though Buddha was very pitiful, he was also very stern. His love is not of the kind that is subversive of justice. In the case of Buddha, as in that of Christ, love and justice seem to be so perfectly harmonized as to constitute but a single virtue. Later in both Buddhism and Christianity, the principle of compassion tends to get divorced, in some degree at least, from justice. The cult of the goddess of mercy in Mahāyāna lands has certain analogies with the cult of the Virgin in the West. The sympathy of the modern humanitarian, though it also tends to override justice, and though it has also, as I have already said, been frequently associated with Christ or Buddha, needs to be judged rather differently – as something more unmistakably subrational.

By its predominant emphasis on the will to refrain, Buddhism is likely to seem to the Occidental unduly negative. The peace and all-embracing charity that the saint is supposed to attain can, however, scarcely be regarded as merely negative. Moreover, though the fruit of the doctrine is often presented negatively as "release from sorrow", it is also presented positively as happiness. The Buddhist temper, like that of the Christian and unlike that of the Stoic, is cheerful.

Rhys Davids, who spent a lifetime in contact with the original documents, insists on the "exuberant optimism" of the early Buddhists. The phrase would seem to call for some qualification. The true Buddhist, like the true Christian, takes a gloomy view of the unconverted man; but, though holding that life quantitatively is bad, he is, regarding a certain quality of life, unmistakably buoyant. Joy rightly receives due emphasis in St. Paul's admirable list of the fruits of the spirit. The same virtue appears in the equivalent lists proclaimed by Asoka to his subjects: the joy in both cases arises from an exercise of the will to refrain.

The early members of the Buddhist Order at all events were not unfamiliar with what Pascal terms total and blissful renunciation (*renonciation totale et douce*). "Let us live happily, then, though we call nothing our own!" Buddhism, indeed, at least in its original form, is more frankly eudaemonistic than Christianity. Traditionally the motive suggested to the Christian for renouncing the world has been the love of God. Buddha would have one make a similar renunciation with an eye primarily to one's own advantage. The phrase "enlightened self-interest" has come to have unfortunate connotations. The meaning given to "enlightened" and "self-interest" by Buddha is at all events at a wide remove from the meaning given to the same terms by the utilitarian. Aristotle is nearer to Buddha when he counsels a man to be a true lover of himself. Doctrines that urge one not to think of one's self at all but to act purely for the love or greater glory of God, or in more recent times, purely for the love of humanity, have a certain abstract nobility; but it may be doubted whether they are as deeply grounded as the doctrine of true self-love in the facts of human nature. To be sure, the doctrine of true self-love, like any other doctrine that may be set up, is easily abused. We hear of the prevalence in Buddhist lands of a literal and unimaginative computation of merits and demerits according to the law of Karma, a sort of spiritual bookkeeping that may lead one to be self-regarding in the wrong sense. The complaint is also made that, as a result of Buddha's insistence that a man's first duty is to himself, Buddhists are, as compared with Christians, lacking in the spirit of mutual helpfulness.

It is hard to see why the teaching of self-love should result thus undesirably, if it is made sufficiently plain that the self that one loves is not only a higher self, but a self that one possesses in common with other men. As for the ordinary, or natural self, Buddha often uses language that reminds one of Christianity. His paradox of true self-love, interpreted in the light of renunciation, does not turn out so very differently from the Christian paradox of dying that one may live. According to Buddha, anything that is impermanent is not only unreal but finally illusory. In virtue of his psychological method, however, he does not as a rule dwell, after the fashion of the Hindu philosopher, on illusion in general (*māyā*) but on conceit or the illusion of the ego (*manas*). The eliminations imposed by the putting aside of the false or illusory self are, even from the point of view of the austere Christian, extremely drastic. Failure to make these eliminations is due to a failure to exercise the higher will, the will to refrain. One may say indeed that, according to Buddha, the root diseases of human nature are conceit and indolence, and that the conceit itself turns out at last to be only an aspect of the indolence; so that, even as spiritual strenuousness is the supreme Buddhist virtue, so spiritual slackness or supineness is the unpardonable offense. One must constantly keep in mind, however, that both the strenuousness and its opposite have reference primarily, not to the outer world, but to meditation. "Meditate therefore," says Buddha, "and be not indolent lest later ye have reason to repent."

Meditation is, indeed, so paramount in Buddhist belief and is carried so far that one is forced to consider in connection with it one of the most difficult of all questions – that of mysticism. The first step in dealing with this baffling term would seem to be to limit it. The tendency on the part of certain authorities so to widen the term as to make it identical with religion itself is inadmissible. Bossuet, for example, although genuinely religious, was, so far from being mystical, positively unfriendly to mysticism. One is aided in dealing with the word mystic, as in dealing with *yoga*, by a reference to its etymology. Etymologically the mystical state implies an actual closing of the eyes. In the true mystic there is always a considerable blunting and even complete suppression of ordinary consciousness in favor of what is conceived to be a wholeness of some kind or a more genuine unity. Buddhist meditation is undoubtedly mystical in this sense. For example, we learn regarding Buddha himself the realistic detail that on a certain occasion he was not disturbed in his contemplation by a thunderbolt that struck near him, killing two peasants and four oxen. One is reminded of the *henôsis* or mystic absorption in the One of a Plotinus. Yet right at this point one needs to make sharp discriminations. The teaching of Plotinus and the neo-Platonists in general, however much it may agree with that of Buddha in this or that particular, is in its total tendency, radically divergent. This divergence is nowhere more apparent than in the quality of the mysticism the two teachings have fostered. On the immensity of the neo-Platonic influence, especially of Plotinus, not merely on European culture but on the culture of the Near East, it is scarcely necessary to dilate. Through the treatise of the pseudo-Dionysius and other channels this influence penetrated into Christianity itself. It received a fresh impetus in the early Renaissance from such works as Ficino's commentary on the *Symposium*. The confusion between the neo-Platonic interpretation of Plato and a genuine Platonism has not been dissipated even to the present day. It is possible to detect the persistent neo-Platonic strain in mystics so far apart in time as Eckhardt, Boehme, and Blake.

The first obvious contrast between Buddha and the mystics who have been in greater or lesser degree neo-Platonic, appears in their respective attitudes towards the problem of evil. For Plotinus evil has no intrinsic reality, it is only an absence of the good. One may recognize in Plotinus himself an element of genuine spirituality – he is very far from being like Buddha a clear-cut figure – and one may at the same time insist on the danger of this notion that evil is mere deprivation. It tends to discredit everything that is felt negatively and restrictively, to associate the pursuit of the good with expansive longing rather than with renunciation. The nostalgia that has assumed so many forms in Western religion and literature is not unrelated to the neo-Platonic influence. The reaching out towards the "infinite" in this sense is at all events alien to a teacher who held that the higher will in man is primarily an inhibition, and who is in this sense, as I have said, an uncompromising dualist.

The true humility of the Christian with its subordination of man in his natural self to a divine will is also sharply dualistic. The mystic of the neo-Platonic type tends, on the contrary, to blunt the edge of this dualism or even to suppress it entirely. He is less concerned than the Christian with man's sinfulness or than the Buddhist with his spiritual indolence felt as a positive evil. With the resulting decline in humility, he is inclined to substitute for the sense of one's dependence on the divine an assertion of identity with it. The Roman Catholic Church has given recognition to mystics who exhibit traits that to the ordinary person seem pathological. It may be doubted, however, whether with its secular experience it has ever countenanced any mystic capable of announcing, as Sister Katrei announced to Eckhardt, that she had "become God".

Eckhardt's own mysticism has, along with marked neo-Platonic elements, points of contact with the right school that exalted intellect above will. In general it is important to determine the attitude of a mystic towards intellect both in itself and in its relation to will. The neo-Platonic mystic reminds one of the Buddhist in that his ultimate is an indefinable. The Buddhist holds, however, that in order to achieve his ultimate he needs to exercise the sharpest discrimination. One is tempted to say, although the phraseology is not Buddhistic, that in treading his "path", he would use his intellect as an instrument of the higher will. The neo-Platonist, on the contrary, tends to fall away from the form of concentration that seems so salutary to the Buddhist, in favor of expansiveness. He then wins a more or less mystical unity at the expense of discrimination. The maxim *omnis determinatio est negatio* is sound in itself. When, however, negation is conceived neo-Platonically as mere absence of the good, an interpretation of the maxim follows that is not conducive to self-limitation or to limitation of any kind.

It is at all events highly important to know whether the union with a larger whole – the goal of every mystic – is won by the multiplication or the obliteration of distinctions. The intellect when left to its own devices is prone, as one may already see in Plotinus, to forget its secondary and instrumental rôle and to set up absolutes or, what amounts to the same thing, to devise some metaphysical denial of that dualism which is the scandal of reason and is nevertheless one of the immediate data of consciousness. This monistic trend, even when it does not take on a mystical coloring, results in its extreme form, and that from the Taoists of ancient China down to Hegel and Croce, in the assertion of a *coincidentia oppositorum* or identity of contradictories, and finally to a denial of the distinction that it would seem most important to preserve – that between good and evil. The intellectual running together of opposites has, as every student of our modern "return to nature" is aware, its emotional equivalent, which also frequently takes on a mystical coloring. Mysticism of this latter type would seem to be at the opposite pole from that of Buddha. The early Buddhists practised certain "unpleasant meditations" on the decay and corruption of the body which will be found to justify their title. One may cite by way of contrast the utterance of the "mystic" Novalis: "One touches heaven when one touches a human body"; or the somewhat grotesque equivalent of this utterance in Walt Whitman, who has also been termed a mystic: "I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so luscious." When Whitman speaks of the "mystical deliria" of the senses he uses the word mystical in a sense, one scarcely need point out, that would have seemed to Buddha sheer madness. The primitivistic reverie that is at the basis of the mysticism of a Novalis or a Whitman cannot, like genuine meditation, be regarded as a form of action. It results rather from a dissipation of attention, a relaxation of one's grip on the world of spiritual values and even on the facts of the natural order; so much so at times as to suggest that it has its source in actual physical debility.

The foregoing analysis, if correct, would seem to justify the conclusion that the record of so-called mysticism in the Occident has been in general highly dubious; that the modern return to nature in particular, though it has revealed new sources of poetry, offers in its mystical aspects, and that from either a Christian or a Buddhist point of view, a mere subrational parody of genuine meditation. It is well to remember that the Far East has also had a primitivistic movement of immense extent in Taoism and that, either as a result of Taoist intrusion or other influences, the Mahāyānist seems to have developed at times a quality of meditation more or less pantheistic and in so far unlike that found in the original doctrine. Anyone who seeks to meditate in Buddha's sense must be, as regards the intellect, keenly discriminating, and, as regards the higher will, strenuous; whereas according to Wordsworth, in what one is tempted to call his Taoist phase, the man who wishes to commune with nature must combine passivity with a distrust of the "meddling intellect".

In this matter of meditation as in other respects one scarcely needs to insist on the immensity of the psychic gap that separates the Buddhist Orient from the Occident of today. It is because of this gap, at least as much as because of insufficient information, that so many Western treatises on Buddhism are almost unconsciously partisan, at times violently partisan. Renan maintained that one could not be polite in a Parisian omnibus without violating the rules of the company. Even so anyone who sets out to be a Buddhist today would find himself in conflict with some of the underlying assumptions of our civilization. An Occidental is as likely to be as much disconcerted on a first reading of the Buddhist *Nikāyas* as one may suppose an ancient Buddhist would be if set down in a modern power-house. The phenomenal world that alone seems to us real and to which we therefore cling desperately he would have us look upon as a flying mist of illusion. On the other hand the Nirvāna towards which Buddha urges us to strive affects us as mere nothingness. It is to be feared that he would have held our opinions on this point in scant esteem. The truth of his discipline, he would have insisted, can be apprehended only by putting it into practice. Knowledge in matters religious waits upon will. It is the result of doing certain things. So far from doing these things, we are doing almost the exact opposite. He would therefore have dismissed us as mere theorists. In general, it may be a help in elucidating this subject to reverse the usual question as to what we are to think of Buddha and ask rather what Buddha would think of us. This latter question is one that can be answered with certainty, assuming that Buddha remained Buddha and was not swept off his feet by our wonderfulness; for we are very wonderful. The Oriental even at the present day is astounded by our material achievements.

In its essence Buddhism is, as I have said, a psychology of desire, so that all that is needed for a reply to the question what Buddha would think of us is to compare positively and critically our attitude towards the expansive desires with that of Buddha. The movement that became predominant in the Occident with the emergence of the middle class in the eighteenth century and which still continues, may be defined in its two main aspects as utilitarian and sentimental. The outstanding characteristic of the movement in both of these aspects has been its enormous expansiveness. The utilitarian is wont to pursue an ever-expanding production as an end in itself. The point of view of an eminent American economist has been summed up in the formula: "Pigs for more pigs for more pigs." A world of frenzied producers requires as its complement a world of frenzied consumers. The expert in advertising has been gravely praised of late for making two desires grow where only one grew before. The extirpation of desire in the Buddhist sense, or even the limitation of desire in the humanistic sense, would plainly be injurious to trade. If need is felt of a counterpoise to the acquisitive life, recourse is had, not to a genuinely restrictive principle but to the sympathy and spirit of service recommended by the sentimentalists, which is at bottom only another form of expansion.

To both types of expansionist I have been defining, Buddha's psychology of desire seems intolerably astringent. To Buddha, on the other hand, a view of life that combines the extreme of outer activity with the extreme of spiritual indolence would have seemed one-sided to the point of madness. The current notion that it is possible to establish a collective peace and brotherhood among men who are individually filled with every manner of restlessness, would have seemed to him positively delirious. We are wont to deal with the question of war and peace at its extreme periphery, — for example war or peace between nations. Like the Christian, the Buddhist would begin at the center — with the issue of war or peace in the heart of the individual. Any conquest that the individual may win over his own inordinate desires will be reflected at once in his contact with other men. If the individual happens to be one in high station, such a conquest may have almost immediate consequences in the field of political action.

One may illustrate interestingly from the history of Buddhism. About 273 B.C., Asoka, grandson of that Chandragupta who defeated in the Punjab and drove back the Macedonian garrisons left by Alexander the

Great, succeeded to a realm more extensive than modern British India. He had it in his power to drench the world in blood. He actually made a beginning – and then came his conversion to Buddhism. The result may be told in his own words as they appear in the edicts which he caused to be engraved on rocks or pillars throughout his vast empire. In one of his rock edicts he tells of his "profound sorrow" at the hundreds of thousands who had been slain in his war on the Kalingas, as well as at the misery that had been brought upon a multitude of non-combatants. "If a hundredth or a thousandth part of these were now to suffer the same fate it would be a matter of regret to his Majesty." A mighty emperor who not only repented of his lust of dominion but had his repentance cut into the rock for the instruction of future ages – this under existing circumstances is something to ponder on. The type of statesman with whom we are familiar in these latter days is wont to indulge his own will to power as well as that of the national group to which he belongs, and then, when the untoward consequences appear, to evade responsibility. Nearly everyone, for example, who was concerned with the outbreak of the Great War has been proclaiming his own blamelessness and at the same time pointing an accusing finger at someone else.

We shall discover perhaps even more unedifying aspects of human nature than this search for scapegoats if we probe this whole question of war and peace by a Buddhistic method; if, in other words, we envisage it from the point of view of the inner life and then deal with the inner life itself positively and critically, in the opposition it offers between the principle of control and the expansive desires. According to an ancient Sanskrit epigram the uncultivated man and the thoroughly cultivated man are alike in having few and simple desires; the man who has reached the stage of half-way knowledge, on the other hand, is insatiable. Precisely this type of insatiableness has appeared in the modern man who has become too critical to accept the traditional controls but not critical enough to achieve new ones. In tracing the process by which in our modern period the principle of control in human nature has been weakened in favor of a sheer expansiveness one needs to attend carefully to the fortunes of the doctrine with which this principle had been traditionally associated – the doctrine of divine grace. An important aspect of the sentimental movement has been primitivism. The primitivist inclines to look for goodness not to the grace of God but to the grace of nature. Instead of the inner workings of the spirit on which both Christian and Buddhist put so much emphasis, he proclaims a "wise passiveness". The utilitarian, representing the other chief aspect of the modern movement, has obscured the truths of the higher will in the Christian or any other form, by his tendency to transfer action from the inner life to the outer world, to put a material in place of a spiritual efficiency.

One can trace this development with special clearness among Protestants, notably perhaps among Calvinists. Calvin granted to God so much and to man so little in his scheme of salvation that his followers inclined to turn their efforts from the inner life where they seemed to be of no avail to the outer world, and then, in the type of prosperity achieved by this kind of working, to see a sign that they were in the divine favor. This development has rightly received attention from those who have studied the rise of modern capitalism with its exaltation of the acquisitive life.

At all events, an outstanding feature of the humanitarian movement on both its utilitarian and its sentimental side has been its expansiveness, its reaching out for more and ever for more. The representatives of this movement are not willing to admit that they are foregoing the benefits that not merely Buddha but the religious and humanistic teachers of the Occident as well have associated, not with expansion, but with concentration. On the contrary they have proclaimed a progress that is supposed to lead in the direction of peace and fraternal union among men. In short, though resolved to renounce nothing, they hope to enjoy all the fruits of renunciation. They would seem to illustrate, on a large, perhaps an unprecedented scale, a trait that is universally human but is specially visible in the half-educated man — the proneness namely to harbor desires that are not only numerous but often incompatible. The explanation of this tendency to reach out after certain ends and at the same time seek to evade the means is only too obvious: though the ends are desirable the means are difficult and disciplinary. The readiness of men to succumb to schemes for acquiring sudden wealth is familiar. It probably offers only a faint image of their proneness to yield to the lure of teaching that seems to hold out the hope of spiritual riches without any corresponding effort. In America — and America is the paradise of the half-educated — substantial material rewards await anyone who can devise some new and painless plan for getting "in tune with the infinite".

The revolution in the very basis of ethics implied in the setting up of utilitarian or sentimental substitutes for religion has not perhaps attracted an amount of attention commensurate with its importance. The gravity of this revolution would probably have been more manifest had it not been accompanied by a sort of revolution in the dictionary. The words that had been used traditionally to sum up certain ethical and religious ideas were retained but with a modification of the traditional meanings. The modern movement indeed, especially since the eighteenth century, illustrates another trait of the imperfectly cultivated man: he not only has numerous and frequently incompatible desires, but he dissimulates this incompatibility both from himself and others by a vague and confused use of general terms, or it may be, by a transfer of general terms from one scheme of values to another. For example, the sentimentalist has associated words like virtue and conscience not, as traditionally, with a will to refrain, but with expansive emotion. The utilitarian again has also inclined to eliminate the will to refrain and the inner effort it involves in favor of a mere outer working. This shifting of emphasis is reflected above all in the changed meaning of the word comfort. Material comfort has come more and more to seem to the modern man a satisfying substitute for spiritual comfort.

To be sure, one does not know what secret qualms may torture the modern man or at least an occasional modern man as he is whirled he knows not whither in an ever-increasing mass of interlocking machinery. To all outer appearances, however, most men no longer crave the security and serenity which are of the essence of religious comfort and have allowed these terms, like the term comfort itself, to be appropriated by the utilitarians. An American life-insurance company recently advertised as follows: "Buddha, who was born a prince, gave up his name, succession, and his heritage to attain security. But . . . we do not have to give up the world; we have only to see a life-insurance agent who can sell us security for the future, the most direct step to serenity of mind."

The issues raised by this advertisement evidently involve much more than one's attitude towards Buddha. For example, the differences of outlook between Christ and Buddha are inconsequential compared with the difference between them both and the man who believes that serenity and security are something one may purchase from the agent of a life-insurance company. In general, a collateral benefit of any comprehension one may achieve of Buddha is that it will help one to a better understanding of Christ. One will be less likely to confound him with the humanitarian phantom that has for several generations past tended to usurp his place. This usurpation has been made plausible, as I have said, by a tampering with general terms; it has also illustrated on a large scale another human proclivity – the proclivity namely to read one's self into the great figures of the past. Thus both primitivists and utilitarians have sought to refashion Christ in their own image. For instance the author of a recent Life of Christ, Giovanni Papini, complains that the "exhausting mercantile superstition of our day" has led to an utterly one-sided activity. The desirable opposite of this utilitarian one-sidedness is, he would have us believe, not another form of action but the sheer inaction (*Wu wei*) of the ancient Chinese Taoist, which he proceeds to identify not merely with the primitivism of Rousseau but also with the wisdom of Christ. On the other hand, another recent interpreter of the Gospel narrative, Mr. Bruce Barton, wishing to commend Christ to an age that plumes itself above all on its efficiency, presents him as a master of the art of advertising and an ancestor of the modern man of business.

If the man of the West has been falling away from religion in the fashion I have indicated, it is not to be supposed that the man of the East has maintained himself on the level of religious insight that one finds in Buddha and his early followers. On the contrary, it would probably be even more difficult to find an *arhat* in the full Buddhist sense in contemporary Asia than it would be to discover any complete exemplar of Christian sanctity in the Occident. Furthermore, if we are to trust certain passages in the Pāli Canon, Buddha's own contemporaries, who were as definitely concentrating on religious problems as the present age is on material efficiency, did not find his teaching easy to grasp. "Profound, O Vaccha, is this doctrine," Buddha is represented as replying to a puzzled inquirer, "recondite and difficult of comprehension, good, excellent and not to be reached by mere reasoning, subtile and intelligible only to the wise; and it is a hard doctrine for you to learn who belong to another sect . . . and sit at the feet of another teacher." There is also the tradition of the "private Buddhas" who did not see fit to give their wisdom to the world. Nay, it is related of Gotama himself that, after having attained supreme illumination, he hesitated about attempting to bestow it upon mankind "held spellbound by its lusts". Finally Brahmā Sahampati himself appeared before him and entreated him not to disappear from the world without proclaiming the Doctrine. "There are those," he added, "who will understand." Buddha finally assented, exclaiming: "The door is open to the deathless."

If it was not easy for Buddha's contemporaries to enter the door thus opened, to attune their ears to "sweet airs breathed from far past Indra's sky", the task is doubly difficult for the unmeditative Occidental; for it is plain that one cannot have even an inkling of the nature of the insight Buddha professed without some grasp on the idea of meditation. From this point of view the Occidental is likely to find the Buddha of certain schools of Mahāyāna more accessible, Buddha conceived less as a master of meditation than as a Lord of compassion; such a conception, however, finds comparatively little support in the older records. To be sure, the Mahāyānist, even though he grant the greater historical authenticity of the Pāli Canon, is prone, like certain Christians, to take refuge in a theory of development and to allege in particular the paramount place given to compassion as proof of the superiority of the developed over the original doctrine. Theories of development are, however, when applied to religion, dubious, whether the religion be Buddhism or Christianity. Peripheral development there may well be – for example, in Buddhist or Christian art; but development at the center is another matter. A great religion is above all a great example; the example tends to grow faint in time or even to suffer alteration into something very different. Buddhism seems to have most vitality today in Hīnayāna rather than in Mahāyāna lands. The reason may be that in the former lands there has been less sophistication of the figure of the Founder.

The whole question is related to a topic that is now being actively discussed: namely, what is the specifically Oriental element in the Orient and what should be the attitude of the Occident towards this element? According to a recent French writer, Europe, appalled at the one-sided American cult of mass production and mechanical efficiency, feels that it may finally have to choose between Henry Ford and Gandhi. There is much in the teaching of Gandhi, however, that is more suggestive of Tolstoy than of the genuine Oriental seer. Buddha, on the other hand, not only stands for an idea that is typically, though not exclusively, Asiatic – the idea of meditation – but he deals with meditation and the form of effort it requires in a more positive and critical fashion perhaps than any other religious teacher. The significance of his teaching for the Occident, so far as it has any, would seem to be here. The scientific naturalists profess at present to have a monopoly of positive and critical method. The attempt, however, to bring the whole of human experience under the natural law, so far from being genuinely positive and critical, involves a lapse at some point into mere dogma and metaphysical assumption.

It would seem desirable, then, that those who object on either humanistic or religious grounds to the overreaching attitude of the scientific naturalists should not burden themselves with any unnecessary metaphysical or theological baggage, and that their appeal should be to experience rather than to some counter-dogma. As is well known, the more thorough-going naturalists have been tending more and more to discard speculative philosophy in favor of psychology; and herein they are at one with Buddha. One is conscious, however, of some underlying discrepancy between Buddha and the naturalistic psychologists, and that precisely at the point where, in spite of serious divergences, these psychologists are in accord with one another. One may illustrate from the behaviorists and the psychoanalysts, who may be taken to represent the extreme opposing wings of contemporary psychology. The psychoanalyst is introspective, at least to the extent that he is concerned with certain desires and impulses of the natural man as reflected in states of consciousness. The behaviorist, on the other hand, is so eager to be "objective", to avoid even the suspicion of introspection, that he is ready to deny instinct as understood by the psychoanalyst and even consciousness itself.

There is a sense in which Buddha agrees with both behaviorist and psychoanalyst. Like the psychoanalyst he reduces the human problem to a psychology of desire, and then deals with desire itself in terms of conflict and adjustment. Like the behaviorist, again, he would deal with man neither metaphysically nor theologically but positively, and from this point of view is ready to assert that "man is what he does". If in his total position he seems so widely removed from both psychoanalyst and behaviorist, the explanation is that he affirms as a matter of immediate perception a principle of control in man that all schools of naturalistic psychology deny in favor of some form of monism. If the quality of will proclaimed by Buddha and other religious teachers is a fact, it is plainly a fact of overwhelming importance; so much so that any view of life that fails to reckon with it will finally turn out to be nugatory. If one affirms that man is what he does and then, like the behaviorist, conceives of doing merely in terms of reactions to outer stimuli, the result is a monstrous mutilation of human nature. A similar failure to take account of the higher will vitiates the psychoanalytical idea of adjustment. Religion also looks upon life as a process of adjustment. This process as envisaged by the Christian is summed up once for all in Dante's phrase: "His will is our peace." A reading of works like the Dhammapada suggests that the psychological equivalent of this form of adjustment was not unknown to the Buddhist.

It is true that in a naturalistic era like the present the refusal to recognize a superrational factor in human nature has a certain plausibility. At such a time a psychology that does not discriminate qualitatively between the behavior of a man and that of a frog, may seem to have some support in the facts. One might, again, take psychoanalysis more seriously if it applied to the genuinely religious Buddha as perfectly as it does to the pseudo-religious Rousseau and his innumerable spiritual progeny. It is well therefore, if one does not wish to fall victim to the fallacies of the naturalist, to turn from an age like our own which tends to see in life only a free expansion of wonder and curiosity to certain periods of the past that were more preoccupied with the problem of religious or humanistic control. The situation with which Buddha had to cope in his affirmation of the principle of control was not so different from our own as one might infer from his remoteness in time and place. He lived in an age of extreme philosophical sophistication. Naturalistic doctrines were being proclaimed very similar in their practical implications to scientific determinism.

In general, there is an irreconcilable opposition between Buddhism and any philosophy or psychology ancient or modern that tends, on any grounds whatsoever, to obscure the truths of the higher will. Buddha's emphasis on this will is so fundamental that, according to a German authority, his teaching may be summed up in the lines of Goethe:

Von der Gewalt die alle Menschen bindet
Befreit der Mensch sich der sich überwindet —

lines that recall a sentence of Milton's: "He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears, is more than a king." One should not forget, however, that, though Buddhism is hostile to all doctrines that deny a principle of control in human nature, it is not necessarily in accord with every doctrine that affirms such a principle.

The sayings of Goethe and Milton I have just quoted would have met the approval of a Stoic. Milton's use of the word king is indeed very much in the Stoical tradition. Yet the wisdom of Buddha, whatever it may be, is not, as I have already remarked, Stoical. One needs to keep in mind here the ordinary contrast between Stoic pride and Christian humility, for the same contrast exists between the Stoic and the Buddhist. The source of Stoical pride would seem to be an usurpation on the part of reason of a primacy that does not belong to it, with a resulting attempt to bring all the facts of experience under a single law, the law of "nature". The Stoic thus comes to deny dualism in his metaphysical theory at the same time that he asserts it in his ethical practice. In other words, he seeks to base the principle of control on a philosophy of immanence; whereas both Christianity and Buddhism are, though on different postulates, transcendent.

Everything will be found to hinge finally on the idea of meditation. This idea has suffered a steady decline in the Occident, along with the transcendent view of life in general, in the passage from the mediaeval to the modern period. Yet it is not certain that religion itself can survive unless men retain some sense of the wisdom that may, according to Dante, be won by sitting in quiet recollection. The meditation of the Buddhist involves like that of the Christian the exercise of transcendent will; this will is not, however, associated, as it normally is in the meditation of the Christian, with that of a personal deity. Persons of positive and critical temper who yet perceive the importance of meditation may incline here as elsewhere to put less emphasis on the doctrinal divergence of Christianity and Buddhism than on their psychological agreement.

Copyright, 1936, by The Oxford University Press, New York, Inc.

REVIEWS

Night Is Sick With Our Dreams*

If sheer bulk is any evidence, we are now in the midst of a fine flowering of verse with a social conscience. As in most literary movements, America in this follows England, though less tardily than has been her custom: the bright comets of Messrs. Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis are still flaming in the literary firmament as our own train of poetic meteors is seen, and certain critics, in *New Masses*, *The New Republic*, and the book-advertising sections of the New York papers, profess to hear in them the music of the spheres. Within the last few years poets and critics have actively concerned themselves with bringing about the union of politics and verse, and Marxism and poetry no longer carry on together merely in little magazines of fierce title, where "ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS", in bold capitals, is as inevitable a way of ending a poem as some invocation to the "prince" was of closing a ballade in the nineties. A new era is here, and the Yale Series of Younger Poets brings out its poetess of the season to forecast the Revolution in a book clothed in appropriate red, while Archibald MacLeish leaves the doubts and hesitations of his customary three dots and question marks and his insistence that "a poem should not mean but be" to call his latest and slimmest volume *Public Speech*.

---

* PUBLIC SPEECH *by Archibald MacLeish* (FARRAR & RINEHART. 30 pp. $1.00). THEORY OF FLIGHT *by Muriel Rukeyser* (YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS. 98 pp. $2.00). BEFORE THE BRAVE *by Kenneth Patchen* (RANDOM HOUSE. 131 pp. $2.00). THE IRON LAND *by Stanley Burnshaw* (CENTAUR PRESS. 115 pp. $2.00). TO MY CONTEMPORARIES *by Edwin Rolfe* (DYNAMO. 64 pp. $1.00). ONE SEASON SHATTERED *by James Daly* (CENTAUR PRESS. 97 pp. $2.00). BREAK THE HEART'S ANGER *by Paul Engle* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. 195 pp. $2.00).

To find Mr. MacLeish so far to the left may be somewhat of a surprise to those who remember that a short time ago he wrote a poem in which he intimated that a heavy Jewish accent was more typical than rare among communists, and because of which he was indicted by John Strachey, whose accent is impeccable, for having a "fascist unconscious". Luckily Mr. MacLeish's unconscious now seems free of its reactionary conflicts, and he has been welcomed to the United Front by Isidore Schneider of *New Masses* for having displayed a "strengthening of ideas . . . sharpening of comprehension". This improvement Mr. Schneider takes as "evidence that for all its excesses proletarian criticism has been helpful". To his mind, of course, proletarian criticism is helpful in so far as it brings about the proletarian mentality, and the point for him is not whether Mr. MacLeish is writing poetry better than, or as good as, *Conquistador*, but whether his metrical foot is in step with the marching workers. Mr. MacLeish, I think, is still on the sidelines, but there are no longer catcalls from his direction, and he is now even ready to say that among the men deserving the address "comrade", one he would not use lightly, are "those that hid in Geneva a time back" – by whom he means, we may infer from Mr.

Schneider's approval, not the diplomats of the League of Nations but Lenin and his friends.

Even in this extremely thin volume, with its provocative title, Mr. MacLeish is, if one determines by a line-count, more concerned with the problems that have appeared in his other verses than with the class-struggle. And again the prevailing tone is nostalgic, and the nostalgia is the one peculiar to Mr. MacLeish, so that one feels the poet is at a great distance in time from all of which he writes and seeks to know old sensations once more rather than what caused them. His sadness, incidentally, may have betrayed him into statements that, in the days when Heywood Broun was excoriated in *New Masses*, would have sent the literary headsmen on a devastating round of heresy-hunting. Those who are not vouchsafed the light can speak with small authority, but these lines suggest a strange resignation, which might easily grow into a form of rightist deviation:

Speaking alone for myself it's the steep hill and the
Toppling lift of the young men I am toward now —
Waiting for that as the wave for the next wave.
Let them go over us all I say with the thunder of
What's to be in the next world. It's we will be under it!

There are in these poems signs of the disturbing progress that is being made by Mr. MacLeish's metrical asthma. The infirmity was discernible in his *Collected Poems*, published last year, where it was induced by the excessive use of run-on lines and colons: the former so numerous as to have the paradoxical effect of a full stop in sound but not in sense, the latter, still more numerous, rather like a black pepper that never resulted in the desired (metrical) sneeze. The following verse is truly breath-taking:

Where the wheel of light is turned:
Where the axle of the night is
Turned: is motionless: where holds
And has held ancient sureness always:

Where of faring men the eyes
At oar bench at the rising bow
Have seen — torn shrouds between — the Wain
And that star's changelessness: not changing: etc.

However, there can be no denying that such prosody requires skill, and Mr. MacLeish remains one of the most skillful of American poets, to whose verse rightly belongs the adjective which is the final approbation of one of the younger poets (Paul Engle) reviewed here: lean. The most one can object to in Mr. MacLeish's use of language is the cutely archaic diction of his prose epigraphs.

Muriel Rukeyser's *Theory of Flight* has had a fervent critical welcome, and she may be called (if the adjective is proper) the white hope of left-wing poetry. In his introduction to her book, Stephen Vincent Benét dubs her "the most interesting and individual of our younger poets". If individuality is susceptible of a species of quantitative analysis and can be ranked higher as it shows more influences, the description is apt; for Miss Rukeyser has taken over Mr. MacLeish's colons (and thought of a device he never discovered — a colon before a question mark) to scatter them through lines on which the reminiscent bell tolls so regularly that the reader will often find himself simultaneously thinking of Messrs. Auden, Gregory, Aiken, Pound, Cummings, and Eliot. In short, Miss Rukeyser writes in that leaden mean which might be called the International Style. All her models have been strongly influenced by the Tudor-Stuart poets; and the influence of this influence on Miss Rukeyser has manifested itself in a search for the odd word, in which she has such a high degree of success that one is always more impressed by her description than by the evocation of the thing described. Miss Rukeyser also recalls the metaphysicals in being predominantly intellectual. But whereas their intellects were means of transubstantiating all experience into the stuff of poetry, hers is a mechanical device which neatly sorts things into the categories of dialectical materialism – a process not easily distinguished from that of prejudice.

Miss Rukeyser says "Split by a tendril of revolt stone cedes to blossom everywhere", and her thesis is that we are emerging, by way of revolution, from a most unpleasant state to a "Mayday moment, forever provoking new belief and blooming". This has the marks of a dream, but when she says "Night is sick with our dreams" she evidently means dreams that center upon the self, dreams that will soon be "shaking . . . with revolution". The title-poem is the longest in the book, and it draws on aeronautics, strike conditions, and sexual experience for its imagery, thus uniting in a new compound the Revolution, the transports of love, and the spell of machinery:

Master in the plane shouts: "Contact":
master on the ground: "Contact!"
    he looks up: "Now?" whispering: "Now."
    "Yes," she says. "Do."

Say yes, people.
Say yes.
YES.

Miss Rukeyser is twenty-one years of age and her verse has little of the overt concern with self customary in youthful poetry. Some youthful traits do mark her work. A well-known adolescent tendency is toward associating emotions of an anomalous intensity or kind with experiences which make the effect seem far in excess of the cause; this disproportion Miss Rukeyser shows in regard to the Revolution. To her revolution is like one of those words in primitive magic which, when known, give power over many things; Miss Rukeyser, it is true, usually refers to the word obliquely, but it is none the less evident that its power does not extend to poetry.

Kenneth Patchen, according to the jacket of *Before the Brave*, "is the American proletarian poet who derives his strength from the people with whom he has worked in the steel mills, on farms, and in road-construction gangs". He has also worked as "a farmhand, a janitor in an apartment house . . . an employee in a rubber plant, and such other odd jobs as he could find". Whether or not among the latter was spittoon-cleaning, such as engaged the bourgeois laureate John Masefield, the jacket does not say. With this background, the title of "proletarian poet" might well be one that Mr. Patchen deserves by more than courtesy; he should be well equipped to speak in the strict idiom, if not in the authentic voice, of the toiling masses. This is how he rallies them to arms:

O seal the shining! this stillness binds the stars

In ageless shell of space. Permit no caricature
Of puny hare betrayed by moon; no sober
Music's beeless hive;
    give
Blow for blow and back to fellow-back
The driving shine of quiet mind. . . .

It is more difficult to conjecture how he expects the proletariat to respond to this:

How white how calm the hours are
I still have time
        the body of living beats in my hand
schemeless
        like a garden of voices in the sky
                                        what
crucified mounts a creatured stair
soldiers gentlemen soldiers'
boots have made it crimson there. . . .

We have been frequently warned against looking in poetry for such meaning as we can get from a textbook of geometry or a piece of expository prose; and with this in mind, it is perhaps simpler to see the intention behind Mr. Patchen's verse. The bulk of his verse is, designedly, just so many words, we may hazard, an incantatory ritual meant to prepare us for some overwhelming statement of fact, just as "ibbety bibbety sibbety sab" is the form children use to precede the really important decision of who is to be "it". The main body of his verse is a preliminary by which Mr. Patchen endeavors to bring about our not entirely willing suspension of disbelief, preparing us for final lines of this sort: "We know our enemies", "We cannot fail", "An honest downright new way when we take it over", "to build a workers' working class", "Comrades, the Red Woman!", "and any man can live on earth when we're through with it", "new men new world new life", "Set up machine-guns over the stale belly-aching of our books". In view of the last statement, liberals can well afford to pause and consider when Mr. Patchen closes a poem addressed to them: "Your whiter cloaks provide a better sight on you." Evidently some of Mr. Patchen's incantation is not meant to be effective through sound alone, for he brings in a fair number of words which draw an invariable emotional response from the right audience, words like "Mussolini", "Machado", "Hoover", "Hitler", "One Big Union", "a guy named Marx", and "Soviet Soviet". Those conditioned to these reflexes should derive considerable pleasure from *Before the Brave.*

Like Mr. Patchen, Stanley Burnshaw has worked in a steel mill; he describes *The Iron Land* as "not a collection of unrelated records in verse; it is presented as unit of experience . . . chronological reading is essential. *The Iron Land* tells a story of a contemporary steel mill seen with the eyes of a young middle-class white-collar employee. It records his personal growth through workaday experiences (poems printed in roman type) as well as through personal doubts, deliberations, escapes (poems printed in italics), into a new-world directive." His book, then, is rather like an impressionistic novel, with the difference that the central observer is not very sharply defined. However, certain traits of the observer do come out distinctly. Naturally enough he hates the bosses, though he gives them an archaic glamor by calling them "emperors", "princes", "barons", "knights-at-arms". But his hatred of capitalists does not stop at the seats of the mighty, and with rare acuity he sees that the small owner is every bit as much a foe to communism. He deals in this manner with lunchroom-owners, those potential defenders of the *status quo*:

> *While from behind the counter*
> *Pole, Hun, or German leers on the morning rites;*
> *Richer than all these workers, scanning each one*
> *With pitying contempt, in his eyes saying,*
> *"Buy these fine cakes, you poor dirty scum,*
> *Pay first, then gobble!"*

It is a limited type of poetry that can deal only with appearances, and Mr. Burnshaw goes beyond surfaces in recording that the bosses at Cassanod (the steel mill) after a frugal lunch among the employees in the company lunchroom really go off to the luxurious clubs downtown for a satisfying meal.

Hatred of all established things is a compelling drive in proletarian poetry. Since the object of the proletarian poet's hatred (the capitalist system, with most that is good in it a heritage from pre-capitalist eras) is close to him, while the object of his love (the communist system, whose good is identical with the good of capitalism, but more generally shared) is remote in space and time, hatred is perhaps the proletarian poet's true initial drive. Mr. Burnshaw's hate seems to have slopped over its banks and gone whirling about the foundations of industrialism itself: he hates the machine, thinks it ruins the beauty of the countryside and makes work a soulless drudgery. Since communism has no meaning as other than a way of dealing with industrialism, it is at first not evident why Mr. Burnshaw cries:

O, all you millions rise up
Armed with the terrible force of insane despairing
Smash the lies of their filthy God,
Tear the murderous reins from the emperors hands,
Remake these worlds!

Surely the Stakhanov system is not so very different from the speed-up, nor Magnetogorsk from Pittsburgh. But communism is religious in its essence and allows a mystical approach to its wisdom, as Mr. Burnshaw indicates when he adds to the above passage: "Build a world fit for the bloodborn free!" In England Messrs. Auden, Spender, and Day Lewis have found that the blood-deep and dark Lawrentian flux has the same direction as the Marxian dialectic of history and declare the abdomen equally useful with the brain in understanding communism. Mr. Burnshaw would give the former a superior position:

Only when bodies
Have shut out mind

Can they learn the calm
Motion of dream.

Would we could know
The way men moved
When thought was only
A great dark love

And blood lay calm
In a depthless dream.

The shortsighted will tend to identify this with the Nazis' *Blutsgefühl*, but the exercise of reason (or perhaps of the abdomen) should show that communism, which is Russo-Jewish in its present manifestation, is imbued with a deep mystical strain and, after the manner of mysticism, must even devise a tongue of its own: while the Nazis, with brutal Teutonic directness, speak of a "purge", the communist, given mystical insight, knows the death of a million peasants to be just so much "liquidation".

Dynamo, the house which publishes Edwin Rolfe's *To My Contemporaries* in "a series presenting the work of proletarian poets", takes an optimistic view of the size of the poetry-reading proletariat and announces that Mr. Rolfe's book is "limited to one thousand copies". But Dynamo's optimism is perhaps not excessive, for with the development of a more mature style Mr. Rolfe ought to become a Marxian Edgar Guest; as it is now, his verse is intellectually and technically on the level of the verse in Sunday School magazines, though morally inferior. Like Mr. Guest, Mr. Rolfe loves to recall the scenes of his boyhood and is not too heavy with adult cares to flush again in boyish triumph at the thought of when

One day Sigmund and I
killed God forever in a crowded subway
and Flory, Dominic, Howard, Peter
joined us in soaring the heavens, freed of God.

That, certainly, is not Mr. Rolfe at his best, in the search for which we should be wise in accepting the guidance of Horace Gregory, himself a distinguished poet and left-wing reviewer for Mrs. Van Doren's *Books*, who recommends to those "interested in the best of contemporary poetry . . . that fine poem, 'Definition', a poem which I suspect transcends its immediate time and cause and should be remembered whenever men foregather in the difficult and bloody task of building a new society". "Definition" is a sonnet — at least, it has fourteen lines; the octet mentions those who bear the name "comrade" but are "false, deficient in knowledge and love for fellow men", then the sestet makes this affirmation:

> *nevertheless I answer the salutation proudly,*
> *equally sure that no one can defile it,*
> *feeling deeper than the word the love it bears,*
> *the world it builds. And no man, lying,*
> *talking behind back, betraying trustful friend,*
> *is worth enough to soil this word or mar this world.*

It is doubtless merely some trick of personal association that brings to my mind Mr. Service's

> *Believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer;*
> *There's big work to do, and that's why you are here,*

which certainly shows no trace of the blunt alliteration and clipping of articles now common to Mr. Auden's and all left-wing verse.

In *One Season Shattered* James Daly pipes a thin and not unmelodious reed when he looks on nature or his lady-love; when his social conscience directs him to the contemporary scene, he is likely to crowd into ten lines the dissonant names of Charley Mitchell, Ford, Hearst, Rockefeller, Sir Basil Zarahoff, Morgan, Lloyd George, Pontius Pilate, Judge Thayer, Judas, Andy Mellon, Shelley, Einstein, Romain Rolland, Gandhi, Dimitroff, Gene Debs, Lenin, and Trotsky. Before John Marin's paintings Mr. Daly suffers an understandable "vertigo of sheer lines" and seemingly is afflicted in the same manner when confronted with Mr. Auden's "The Orators". I assume that the specific result of the latter on him is "Palimpsest (A Legend of Young Marriage)", which like Mr. Auden's work is in obscure prose and verse, though "Palimpsest" is superior to "The Orators" in being much shorter. In a note appended to this volume, Mr. Daly says "a vein of mysticism is integral to my personality; indeed so integral that it is hard for me to remain the materialist completely enough or long enough to be a thorough-going Marxist". If the poems in *One Season Shattered* are arranged in chronological order, the vein is clearly running dry, and Mr. Daly can look forward to becoming a thorough-going Marxist as his poetic powers decline.

Over a year ago there burst upon the literary scene the barbaric yawp of Paul Engle's *American Song*. Since then Mr. Engle has been spending his time as a Rhodes scholar in the cool cloisters of Oxford, and, after the first wild delirium of possession, has got to thinking about his mistress America. Others, he finds, have preceded him, and in thoroughly youthful fashion he falls into a lather of execration and reproach. It was money she wanted all along, the taste for which she had been seduced into by a succession of industrialists, bankers, and priests, and Mr. Engle will have none of her unless she renounces her ways, looks to Russia, "torn with the trumpeting of all creation", and realizes that the "act of living" is the "act of loving". The personification is Mr. Engle's, who makes America an aggregate of personalities as well — Chicago, California, New York. Mr. Engle also personifies the countries of Europe; as one man to another, he speaks to England, Germany, France, and Russia; and he indicates by his place-notations that he has been in all of these countries, all except Russia – as a result of which, it may be, he looks on that country with a highly approving eye. For it is safe to say that the land of Mr. Engle's heart's desire will always be beyond the next horizon.

Reviewing his earlier book in these pages,* Howard Blake said that Mr. Engle was comparable to those "young men who frequent street corners, who saunter along . . . sidewalks with an anthropoidal lurch in exaggeration of their masculinity". Mr. Engle is still right out with the guys in front of the drugstore, and he has developed a tremendous list to the left, with which he hopes to knock the boys cold when he lets them in on how he's joined up with the Union Square gang and don't care who knows it. So, in syntactically vague blank verse, our pool-room Shelley opens up a barrage of slang and fancy literary language, calls America a bastard in his very first line, says England is an old dodo half dead on her feet, Germany run by a pack of bums, Vienna full of the sound of the "unborn children shrill calling to the dead", and in Russia man is writing his image on the sky in place of God's – and anyway he isn't sorry about saying this last because there isn't any God, only men. All this is shrilled out in a febrile eagle's scream that has not been equalled in nerve-wracking prolongation since Thomas Wolfe let go the million-odd words of *Of Time and the River*. Mr. Engle's verse is afflicted with the familiar American gigantism, which in a happier age found release in the harmless tall stories of the frontier and the legends of Paul Bunyan, but which in the present case inflates a loose blank verse that rushes on so long as Mr. Engle's breath holds out – and he is deep-chested young man. At the end of each section of his poem, Mr. Engle's breath comes in short gasps of rhymed trimeter, but he pushes on to the end, despite the foul play of his rivals:

---

* The American Review, October, 1934, p. 647.

> *Lenin, we cry to you beyond the world,*
> *But there are heavy hands upon our mouths.*

It is perhaps over-estimating the sensitivity of our critics to suppose that those who hailed *American Song* will be embarrassed by *Break the Heart's Anger.* Some of them, of course, may have deduced from the literature of the past that the writer who sets forth with a loud shout over unpathed waters to undreamed shores never reaches port, and has no alternative, as he moves in a circle, but to shout louder and louder to let us know that he is on his way. It is true that Mr. Engle is now claiming that his America, his new found land, will look exactly like the U.S.S.R. when he gets in, and there are a large number of critics and poets with us who shade their eyes from the facts in looking toward that distant land. But it is a land of Cockaigne, the old familiar romantic world of dream, where the errant heart needs no discipline, needs to respond to no truths but the ones it wishes to recognize, and the testimony of all romantic literature gives us a fair prognostic of the eventual destination of the poets reviewed here: after the initial tumult and shouting, they will be set down in land dull, excruciatingly dull. And that, unfortunately, is first true for the reader.

GEOFFREY STONE

Scholars of an Older Day*

NO HISTORIAN of American culture, and no layman who has the slightest interest in the great line of nineteenth-century scholars who established for American culture abroad a reputation unequalled in our own day, can afford to neglect Professor Long's *Literary Pioneers*. He has chosen for presentation six men – George Ticknor, Edward Everett, Joseph Green Cogswell, George Bancroft, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Motley – and it will be the rare American who will not thrill to the industry, nobility of purpose, and intellectual distinction which each displayed. Ticknor, the eldest, was born in 1791; Motley, the youngest, in 1814: though not alone of their generation – the name of Mark Hopkins immediately suggests itself as one of their number – they represented a phase of American culture which grew out of a society whose informing character was annihilated by the Civil War. It happens – and this is Professor Long's reason for bringing them together in this volume – that all six were associated in some degree with Germany; all studied, indeed, at the University of Göttingen, all fell under the influence of the aged Goethe, all served in some respect to translate German culture and scholarship into early nineteenth-century American terms. Needless to say, theirs was a Germany far removed from the later arid academicism of the nineties – a Germany of the earliest great university libraries, of the new flowering of the study of classical languages and culture, and of the first bloom of Oriental studies: a Germany which represented the soundest, the most industrious, and the most fruitful in the European scholarship of the time.

---

* LITERARY PIONEERS *by Orie W. Long* (HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 266 pp. $3.00).

In his six essays Professor Long has been almost too scrupulously objective. The men he discusses speak for themselves in numerous and illuminating excerpts from periodical articles, letters, and diaries, many of the latter unpublished; the author obtrudes his opinions so little that one wishes for another book in which he might elaborate his own views of the contributions to cultural history which his six protagonists have made. To most Americans – who are taught little of this kind of American history in the normal course – the essays will come as a revelation. Here were six young men who were received abroad as the intellectual equals of the finest flower of European scholarship, and who had won their way to such consideration from a standing start. Most of them originated in Boston or the nearby New England towns; most had been graduated from Harvard – but from a Harvard of astonishing humility, poor in instructors, thirsting for books, looking eagerly abroad for both materials and methods of instruction. Yet Ticknor, the youthful confidant of Jefferson in the establishment of the University of Virginia, met and conversed on equal terms with von Humboldt, Southey, Byron, Wordsworth, Scott, Goethe, Tieck, Metternich, King Friedrich Wilhelm IV; made his own reputation, upon his return, with a monumental History of Spanish Literature; and was the chief mover in the foundation of the Boston Public Library.

Similar comments may be made upon the other five. Everett, winner of the first American doctorate from a German university, author of the first significant paper on Goethe to appear in this country (in *The North American Review*), President of Harvard from 1846 to 1849. Cogswell, who gained Goethe's sympathy more than any of the others, and was chiefly responsible for the great German's gift to Harvard of a contemporary set of his works; first organizer on modern lines of the Harvard Library; co-founder, with Bancroft, of the famous Round Hill School, earliest serious effort at sound secondary education in America; selected as Secretary of Legation in Madrid by Washington Irving, only to resign before commencing his service, in order to devote himself to persuading John Jacob Astor to found the Astor Library, now a major part of the great Public Library in New York. Bancroft, student at Göttingen also, youthful friend and admirer of Cogswell, colleague with him in the Round Hill School adventure, author of the first great work of American history; Secretary of the Navy for a year, and, thanks to his German associations, Minister to Berlin in the important years from 1867 to 1874. Motley, pupil of Cogswell and Bancroft at Round Hill, future historian of the Dutch Republics, Secretary to the American Legation at St. Petersburg; participant in a correspondence with Bismarck and author of an autobiographical novel, *Morton's Hope*, which reveal the Old Fox of European diplomacy as a far more human and explicable creature than the history of our formal textbooks leads us to suspect. Longfellow, to the layman most surprising of all, graduate of Bowdoin in 1825 with

Hawthorne and George Washington Pierce; student at Göttingen and at Heidelberg; familiar abroad of Irving, Bryant, Dickens; fellow-traveller with Grillparzer on a stage-coach journey from Munich to Salzburg; first lecturer on Goethe at Harvard; in his early years an amazingly acute literary critic, full of knowledge of all the European literatures.

Such a bare catalogue obviously must do an injustice to Professor Long's work; for quite apart from the fascination which it exercises in detail, it implies an important conclusion for the future of American culture. Here are six men whose influence on the cultural history of their times was enormous: to meet them in Professor Long's book is to learn that they won that influence not through the mere acquisition of knowledge, but through a force of character born of humble reflection upon the deepest problems of human ends. To speak of them in terms of admiration is not simply to bemoan the passing of another age: for one must ask why it is that the significance of such figures is so seldom brought to the attention of the modern American undergraduate; why they come on us as completely strange characters, forcing the layman to readjust all his notions of the forces which went to produce an American culture? The reason is not far to seek. These men were representatives, at one remove, of a settled civilization, of a culture at a stage when men could afford to stop and stare, savoring the flavor of the past and speculating fruitfully upon the present. In their thought one feels only a faint suggestion of the industrial revolution whose full impact, felt after the Civil War, was for a period continuing into our own day to turn American life into a single channel. They lived, not all of them in point of time, but all in point of cultural atmosphere, in a period before the Industrialist victory set America definitely on the path to what Longfellow, sensing the set of the times, early called "the road of worldly gain". They are, in short, men who to the modern seem "dated", who "mean nothing" to the average American of today. But to those who read American history aright, who seek character as well as learning in their educators, who see that such character is formed not by the facts of science but by the speculations of philosophy, and to whom a cultural community with Europe seems a right and natural thing – to such as these, Professor Long's book will come as a stimulus and an encouragement, for where such distinction of mind and personality once was achieved, there is at least hope that it may come to grow up again.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES

Psychological Theology*

DESCRIBED in its subtitle as a constructive study of the acute common problem of education, medicine, and religion, this book is really a discursive exposition of the viewpoint of what is called motivational psychology. The basic principle of this kind of modern psychology is avowed to be the teaching that human happiness and the Promethean will (the will to grow to full stature) depend upon early emotional education rather than upon later opportunity or upon the nature of the social and political order. Dr. Sheldon believes that psychologists have been making the wrong approach and that they must now concern themselves "primarily with the orientational or religious function of human consciousness".

---

* PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PROMETHEAN WILL *by William H. Sheldon* (HARPERS. 265 pp. $2.50).

In his preface he warns us that he uses the word *religion* in a psychological sense and not in a theological sense. It seems that theologies, like nations, are born, live for a time, and die away, but "religious consciousness remains as native to human life as sexual consciousness or hunger consciousness". This religious consciousness he defines as "emotional awareness of relationships in the universe which lie beyond the clear knowledge of the present point in time". He holds that this is by far the most vital and significant area of awareness but that we have lacked "even the rudiments of an intellectually respectable psychology attuned to the contemplation" of it.

Religion, he tells us, has to do primarily with the integration of feeling and intellect, with the maintenance of harmony and mutual acceptability between the inner and the outer world of awareness, between the world of human feeling and desire and the world of objective intellectual presentation. It has nothing at all, it seems, to do with God or gods.

> Theologies must be viewed as products, not as primary elements, of the religious function of the human mind. Our great need is to penetrate to a simple comprehension of this deeper function, and in the light of such a need it becomes vitally important to avoid the common mistake of defining religion in terms of particulars or in terms of a relation to God. God is an important concept in most religious minds, but He is in no sense *primary* or elemental to religion. Intense atheists are also intensely religious.

But this is far from being all. We are further told that "in its most essential meaning religion becomes that influence in human life which is concerned with bringing feeling support to the development of the thought process". It is an offshoot of psychology, for the psychological mind is one which possesses insight into itself and into other minds "and religion is the application of such insight to the conflicts which are causing the greatest blockage of the general development of minds".

Now, when our author decries "the common mistake" of identifying religion with particular beliefs or with a relation to God, he is denouncing as egregious error what has been an accepted definition among philosophers for some twenty-five centuries. Religion is a traditional expression which has meaning only if God or gods exist. In pagan and Christian thought alike there could no more be religion without God than there could be mathematics without numbers or biology without life. Quoting Cicero and Augustine, the one a pagan and the other a Christian, Aquinas defines religion as "a relation to God, to whom we are bound as to an unfailing principle". In this definition there is nothing specifically Christian. Plato or Aristotle would have written it in almost the same terms.

In his repudiation of the concept of God from the notion of religion Dr. Sheldon does not stand alone. Such a repudiation is one of the characteristics of contemporary thought, and it would be easy to compile a lengthy list of twentieth-century writers who have given testimony of their adherence to this new idea of religion.

According to the teaching of the *philosophia perennis* religion is concerned with man's duties to the Source of his being. This is the meaning of the word for the ordinary man. To erase the concept of God from the definition of religion is to do violence to the traditional connotation of the word. It does not help the reader of this book to point out that Dr. Sheldon explicitly professes to use the word in its psychological sense. The trouble is that the ordinary reader is all too likely to employ the word in a theological sense. Religion, in fact, is a "loaded" word. Here is what Dr. Sheldon has to say about such words:

> One of the profoundest wisdoms that human beings can learn is a reverence for words. Our fathers used to teach children a healthy respect for loaded guns. We, the children, must teach a deep respect for loaded words.

There is scarcely a page of this book which does not bear witness to the fact that a vast amount of the profound wisdom of the fathers has been forgotten by the children.

In outlining the problems that confront the Promethean will, the author defines conflict as a state in which an individual is impelled toward two or more incompatible objectives, between which he has been unable to effect a whole-hearted choice. Out of the concept of conflict there grows, it seems, the concept of causation or controlled sequence in the universe, "hence the possibility of interference with sequences, and finally the idea of varying sequences in accordance with conscious wishes. This is *will.*"

His exposition of the operation of the will seems to lead him into the fallacy of the neglected *tertium* *quid*. Telling us that the most fundamental of human tissue-needs are stimuli-to-be-moved-toward and stimuli-to-be-moved-away-from, he says that there is a positive and a negative pole in every human conscious system of purpose:

> When thought of in perspective and abstracted, this positive-negative antithesis becomes the opposed principles of good and evil, and in every purposeful act or thought there must be a balancing of these two principles.

This would mean that in every act of choice the human will would have to choose between good and evil; or, what it actually chooses is the good, and what it rejects is the evil. But this is sheer nonsense. I can certainly choose between two goods, and the good I reject in the act of choice does not suddenly become an evil. I can choose what seems to me to be the greater good at the moment. At my dinner table I can choose carrots instead of spinach. Is the spinach, therefore, an evil? And if I had chosen it, would the carrots have become an evil? The truth is that in every choice-act there is a balancing, but it is not necessarily between good and evil. It is between two desirables, each of which may be good in itself.

It is in the beginning of the fifth chapter of Dr. Sheldon's book that we come upon the explanation of the title. In Greek mythology, the Titan Japetus wedded an ocean nymph, Clymene. They became the parents of the four immortals, Atlas, Menetius, Prometheus (forethought), and Epimetheus (afterthought). Dr. Sheldon sees the human mind as illustrating, more or less, the characteristics of the last-named two. Men may be either Prometheans or Epimetheans. "The Promethean way is along the high road; it is the wish of man to be a god, to awaken to an undreamed splendor, to follow the splendid urge. The Epimethean road leads through the valleys of safety and certainty."

Each of these types is religious, in the author's sense of the word. Both are challenged by a type of mind which he calls the waster mind and which he considers to be very common in American life today. The easiest pages of the book to read are those wherein he discusses the waster. "He is in all things the antithesis of the chastened mind." These truly unchastened individuals are happy opportunists. "At the moment they may actually constitute the happiest element in society, for they are moving toward something definite, and they are wholly devoted to the life that they lead."

To understand this last quotation we must turn back to the front of the book where the author defines happiness in this wise: "Happiness is essentially a state of going somewhere, whole-heartedly, one-directionally, without regret or reservation." But in another place we are told that, in order to be happy, man must have either morality or character. The waster mind has neither, yet he is a happy opportunist. It seems that he will remain happy as long as he is able to keep the pace.

But this is not the only example of confusion of thought. Here is another. "The religious mind always has the least-educated element of society, and the best-educated element, pitted against it as against a common enemy. Religion has few friends among the best intellects, and none among the worst." Prescinding from the question of the objective truth or falsity of that statement, we may well ask where are we to put the various groups of men. The Prometheans and the Epimetheans are essentially religious men, yet apparently they provide few friends for religion. The waster is hostile to religion and possibly falls into the category of "the worst" intellects. What, then, are we to make of this illustration of the theme?:

> They form a queer sort of alliance, these polar enemies of religion, and if you look closely at a communist parade or at one of those Sunday-afternoon atheist meetings that occur on big-city commons, you can always make out a sprinkling of both elements. The furtive face of the hater of civilization and the pale brow of the scholar will both be there.

One thing is quite certain: the waster would not be there. He would be having a good time somewhere. He would be going places, whole-heartedly and one-directionally. Would the Prometheans or the Epimetheans be there, both of them religious types.

In addition to all this, there is a section on the Perplexity of Protestantism. The author believes that Christianity seems likely to survive or perish with Protestantism. But the day may be saved if three important steps are taken: the confessional must be revived as an instrument of psychological technique, the sacraments must be recovered as psychological way-stations to provide the skeleton of emotional continuity and cohesiveness in individual lives, and the practice of preaching must give way to individual and seminar teaching. What precise form of Protestantism is to be salvaged is far from obvious, for the author writes of "a range of more than two hundred varieties of Protestant sect and of related organizations of a semi-Christian or perfunctory Christian flavor, and finally twigging out to independent religious minds who loosely consider themselves Protestant".

A general criticism of the book is that it is far too diffuse and discursive to be easily read or clearly understood. Undoubtedly the author is very much in earnest. He sees the struggle in human minds today and feels the tension of it. Like Jung and many other psychologists, he diagnoses the contemporary problem as a religious problem. His book affords ample evidence, however, that the modern psychological approach to the problem gives little ground for hope of a solution. An emotional awareness of relationships in the universe is a sorry substitute for intelligent knowing. The long tradition of common sense places intellect far above feeling. Aristotle called that great faculty *life*. Aquinas called it by the selfsame name and further said that it was the most perfect thing in life.

Surely what we stand most in need of today is a bracing, masculine use of the intellect against the anarchy of ideas, the riot of philosophical systems, the breakdown of spiritual forces which we see about us. Dr. Sheldon's book – and in this it is typical of the products of the contemporary psychologists – but illustrates how far the moderns have departed from that right use of reason which should be our heritage from the best of the Greeks and the best of those who renewed and maintained the central philosophical achievements of our culture.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

Europe and Two Irish Ladies*

HERR Doktor Spengler was right, if we are to believe these two Irish woman novelists. European civilization is dying and the West is in its evening phase: so goes the story told by many mouths. These two new novels – much advertised, much touted, and, one supposes, about to be much read – are delicate embroideries on a familiar theme. They have much in common: wit, subtlety, elegance, and facility. So much for the credit side of the ledger; the black marks also apply to both books. For both Miss West and Miss Bowen have written beautiful trifles on a much-celebrated theme, and both have fallen prey to the weaknesses of the feminine novelist: they are both over-concerned with the neurotic side of a woman's mind, both allow their style to run away with them, and both, even in their most Freudian moods, give way to the romantic sentimentalism which the world has long branded as Irish.

Miss West's long-awaited novel, her first in seven years, attempts to do much the same thing as Robert Briffault's *Europa* and is rather more successful than that book of over-inflated reputation. Her Isabelle, the thinking reed of Pascal's definition of Man, is a rich, charming, young American woman whose life has been upset from its normal foundations by the tragic death of her aviator husband. She lives in Paris and allows herself to be buffeted around the three points of a triangle formed by a wealthy and charming member of our old Southern aristocracy, a caddish but handsome Parisian *flaneur*, and a wealthy industrialist who has fought his way up from the bottom of the French social ladder. The world she moves in is that which transfers itself from the French Riviera to Le Toquet, from Paris to London, in a fruitless effort to overcome the boredom of its unreasoning and useless life. She is too intelligent to be fooled by the surface glamor: the titles (there are some Russian princes and princesses and some English milords in this book who are far more plausibly ridiculous than Mr. Briffault's social stooges), the gambling for high stakes, the luxury, and the gay irresponsibility. But she is weak enough to yield to the pressure of her station and to be lulled by luxury.

---

* THE THINKING REED *by Rebecca West* (VIKING PRESS. 431 pp. $2.50).
THE HOUSE IN PARIS *by Elizabeth Bowen* (KNOPF. 269 pp. $2.50).

The book is a comedy of manners, an indictment of one European world, and a study, often profound, in feminine psychology. But Miss West has been too lavish with her talents: the book is like a rich cake which can only be nibbled at unless indigestion is to be invited. There is too much brilliance, too many flashes of wit, too much neat turning of phrases: the pyrotechnics hide the warship from which the rockets are fired, and the reader finds that one can only take so much of this at a sitting. And then one has the definite impression that Miss West is too intent upon maintaining her reputation for wit to give proper attention to her theme and its implications. This book suggests that Miss West is the feminine version of that other Irish wit, Oliver St. John Gogarty, the Buck Mulligan of *Ulysses.*

Miss Bowen's *The House in Paris* is a far less intelligent book. It is much more run-of-the-mill fiction, neatly done with some stylistic success. Here the main concern is with feminine and child psychology, and the society in which these people live (and by which they are formed, at least partially) is not treated, satirically or otherwise. The book deals with a young child of mixed blood and illegitimate parentage, and with the people of another generation who made his young life tragic. The child's father was in love with two women; one was to become his wife and the other was to conceive his child when he, torn by his divided passion and by his Jewish neuroticism, committed suicide and got himself out of the mess but left his collaborators in a worse one. This tragic situation becomes more intense years afterward, when the child is about to meet the mother whom he has never seen but encounters instead the man who is now her husband and the other woman. Miss Bowen handles this matter delicately, and occasionally rises to something like Miss West's sensitive brilliance of style. But there is not the same power in this book that there is in *The Thinking Reed* and there are ineptnesses of which Miss West would never be guilty (*e.g.*, the clumsy flashback technique and the artificial neatness of the plot structure). Miss Bowen, however, has created two children who, while they are disgusting little prigs and implausibly precocious brats, are somehow flesh and blood and as hopelessly tragic figures as Jean Cocteau's *enfants terribles*.

These two books lead one inevitably to certain judgements on the woman novelist of the day. Both Miss West and Miss Bowen have won high tribute from the newspaper critics, and the stigmata of greatness are detected in their works by many. But these are only clever, sensitive, and skillful books – Miss West's to a far greater degree than Miss Bowen's – and the adjective "great" does not fit them. To revert to Herr Spengler, the chosen prophet of both these writers, the modern age bears certain alarming signs of parallelism to the Roman Empire in its declining years, and such books as these, which are elegant trifles, strikingly resemble the literature of the late Roman period. The popularity of such books is an even more alarming sign to those who have felt that Spengler was wrong in lumping America with Europe in his song of woe and doom.

MASON WADE